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THE WEEK

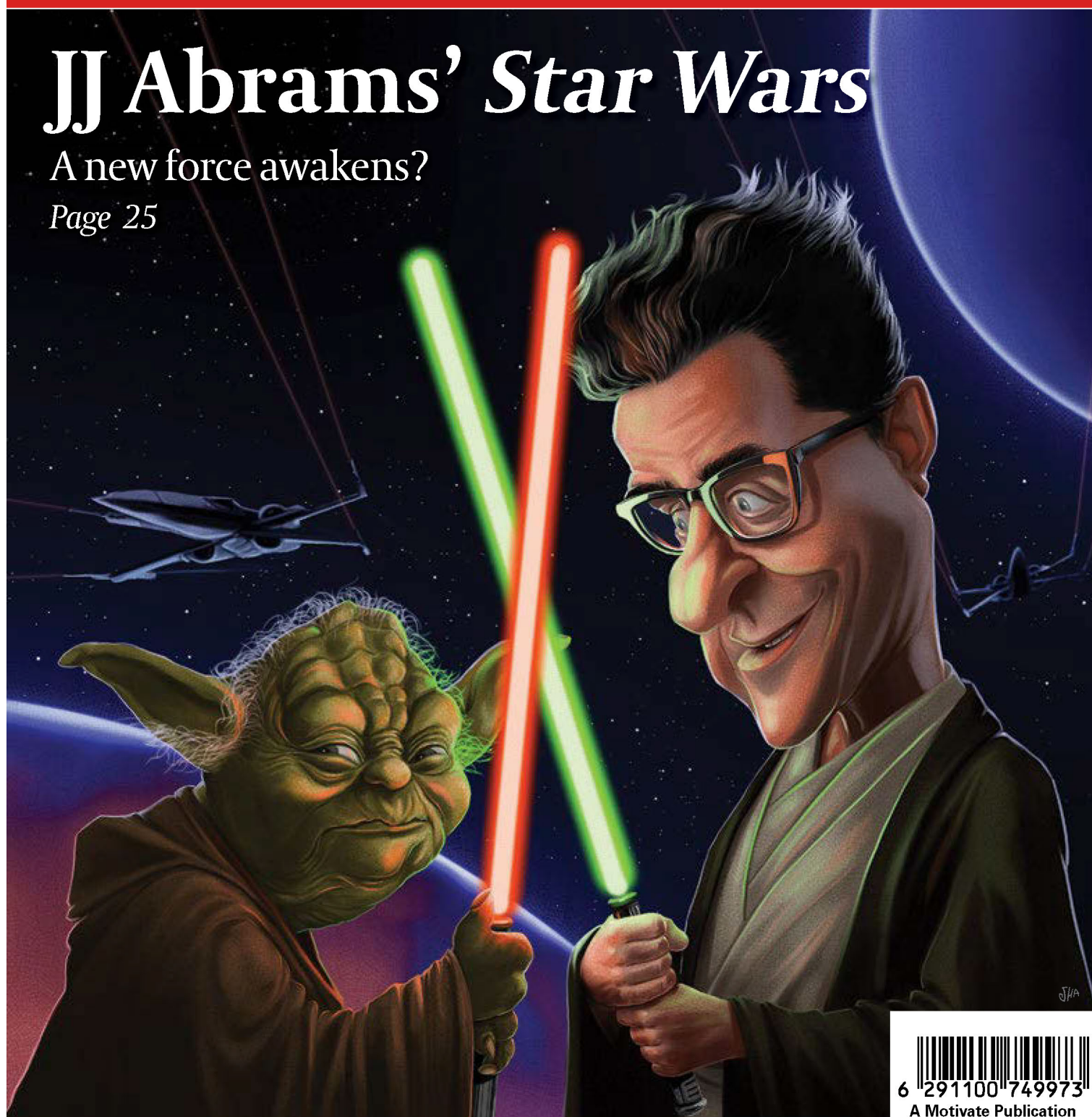
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THE BEST OF MIDDLE EAST AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

JJ Abrams' *Star Wars*

A new force awakens?

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What happened

Britain's EU battle

The British PM last week appeared to drop a key element in his proposed EU renegotiation: a curb on welfare payments to EU migrants. David Cameron had pledged to impose a four-year ban on in-work benefits for migrants coming to the UK. But after a two-day visit to Poland and Romania, two countries strongly opposed to the idea, he appeared to backtrack. Downing Street indicated that Cameron would be willing to bend on the issue of curbing welfare payments when EU leaders meet this week in Strasbourg to debate his demands.

Cameron's whole negotiating strategy is starting to look "not merely futile but shambolic", said Steve Baker, founder of the campaign group Conservatives for Britain.

The "out" campaign was boosted by two polls indicating that support is growing for Britain to leave the EU. One survey found that 42% of people were now in favour of "Brexit", while 40% wanted to stay in the union.



Cameron: "Sickly treacle fudge"

What the editorials said

Cameron's "faltering bid to secure EU reform has descended into farce", said the Daily Mail. Withholding benefits from new migrants was supposed to be his "flagship demand". Now we are told that it's merely one element in a wider "negotiating strategy". Given the "vagueness" of his other proposals, one has to wonder "whether there's anything left worth negotiating about". Cameron has only himself to blame, said The Guardian. As with so many of his policies, this one was put forward not as an urgent matter of national interest but to satisfy the "parochial requirements of Conservative Party management". In seeking to appease his party's right-wing, he has only succeeded in antagonising our EU allies who have now forced him to retreat.

Yet Cameron has a stronger hand than he realises, said The Daily Telegraph. The EU faces an existential crisis brought on by "economic stagnation", the rise of the Eurosceptic right, and the migration crisis. EU leaders must know that if they refuse any concessions, the British may vote to leave, and bring the "whole thing clattering down".

What happened

Aftermath of agreement

"This is a major leap for mankind," declared France's President Hollande last weekend as he welcomed the first global deal to tackle climate change. Under the agreement, reached after a fortnight of intense negotiations at the UN climate talks in Paris, 195 countries have promised to try to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to almost zero within the next 50 years. In pursuit of this objective, the signatory nations will be obliged to report their emission-cutting targets, and their progress in reaching them, every five years. Developed countries have also pledged to give at least \$100bn a year to poorer countries by 2020 to help them adapt to the destructive effects of climate change, and switch from fossil fuels to renewable sources of energy.

The goal of the deal is to limit the global temperature rise to "well below" the recognised danger threshold of 2°C above pre-industrial levels – and "to endeavour to limit that increase to 1.5°C". Under current national emission targets, made ahead of the conference, the world is on course to warm by at least 2.7°C by the end of the century, according to the UN.



Campaigners outside the talks

What the editorials said

"The sight of grinning delegates, linking arms and laughing, at the end of the Paris talks, represents a rare moment of cheer in the normally gloomy business of negotiating carbon emission deals," said The Observer. The optimism is justified. In 2009, talks in Copenhagen aimed at producing a global climate deal collapsed amid recriminations between rich and poor countries. "After six years – most of them the hottest on record thanks to global warming – events look very different." We now have a "sensible foundation for international cooperation", agreed the FT. With China and India alone accounting for a third of global carbon emissions today, it was "essential" that developing nations signed up to this process.

Still, critics are right to be cautious about the deal, said The Times. It identifies a worthy destination, but "gives directions for only half the journey". The only obligation it imposes is that countries submit their emission goals periodically. The hope is that "peer pressure" will then spur states to ratchet up their reforms, but history suggests otherwise. Just look at the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Of the industrialised countries that signed up to "binding" emissions targets under that deal (developing nations weren't required to commit to reductions under it), "almost half missed them".

It wasn't all bad

When farmer Gordon Tweedie saw his entire herd being swept away by raging flood water in Cumbria last week, he assumed he'd never see his cattle again. But remarkably, 41 of the 45 have been found safe and well. Two had survived being washed over a waterfall on the River Eden, while a third was found on a golf course 20 miles away. Separately, three koi carp were reunited with their owner after being spotted swimming in the goalmouth of Carlisle United's flooded football pitch.

A tiger in a safari park in Russia has befriended the goat it was supposed to eat. Amur, a Siberian tiger that lives in Primorsky Safari Park, is fed two live animals a week. But when Timur the goat was sent into the tiger enclosure last month, it went on the offensive, and chased Amur out of his own shelter. The tiger accepted this, opting to sleep on the shelter's roof, and the pair are now inseparable. Staff speculate that Timur – named after a brave character in a children's book – was spared because he showed no fear. They are now feeding the tiger rabbits, "out of respect for goats".



The family of a pilot killed in the Dambusters raid have sold his Distinguished Flying Cross to raise funds for a life-saving dam in Uganda. Flight Lieutenant John "Hoppy" Hopgood was awarded the DFC in 1942. A year later, his plane was hit as it approached the Möhne dam. Though badly wounded, the 21-year-old managed to lift the burning bomber so that two of his crew could parachute to safety before it crashed. This week, his medal raised \$36,000 for a WaterAid "sand barrier" that will create a source of clean water for nearly 100,000 people.

What the commentators said

For years David Cameron has boasted to Tory party conferences that he would be “the harbinger of substantial change to the EU”, said Brian Monteith in *The Scotsman*. Now all he is likely to win from Brussels are some modest promises to exempt Britain from “closer union”, cut bureaucracy, and protect the status of non-Eurozone states. In short, it will be a “sickly treacle fudge”. Not that the benefits ban would have served much purpose. What attracts migrants to Britain isn’t our welfare system; it’s the chance of a job in our “thriving British economy”. And they will now be even keener to come here thanks to the Chancellor’s new statutory living wage of \$10.75 an hour; five times the official rate in, say, Romania. Cameron’s first mistake was to include the benefits ban in the Tory manifesto, said Andrew Rawnsley in *The Observer*. Even the most sympathetic of his fellow EU leaders have long made it clear that they could never accept a proposal that so clearly discriminated against their own citizens: they know that to back any such change would be to commit “political hara-kiri”.

It looks bad for Cameron, said Rachel Sylvester in *The Times*. The Eurosceptics are making the running, the polls are worryingly close. Yet buoyed by his success at the Scottish referendum, and in the last election, he remains complacent. Luck played a large role in both those victories, but he and his allies put it down to their own brilliance. They are now so smug that – in the words of one disaffected minister – “if they were a make of chocolate, they’d eat themselves”. As a result, they’re failing to acknowledge their vulnerability on Europe. Nevertheless, given his talent for bending and weaving, Cameron will probably win the vote, said Matthew Parris in the same paper. “Red lines will be smudged, victory declared and we’ll end up roughly where we were.” And that’s when he should quit. His pragmatism has often served us well, but what the country now needs is a leader with purpose, direction, ideas. Cameron is not that leader.

What next?

Parliament this week approved a bill theoretically allowing for a referendum as early as next June. But for logistical reasons, the Government may not wish to have a vote so close to the London and Welsh elections in May.

In any case, any deal reached in Strasbourg will need final approval at another EU summit in February. Some proposals might also need ratification by member states, a process that could take several years, possibly stretching beyond the 2017 deadline that the Cameron has set for the referendum.

What the commentators said

Has the Paris accord saved our planet? “Maybe,” said Paul Krugman in *The New York Times*. It could go the way of the Kyoto agreement, which “seemed like a big deal but ended up being completely ineffectual”, but this time there’s a better chance of success. For instance, China, once a major “roadblock”, is now on side. Faced with a dangerous smog crisis, the country is keen to wean itself off fossil fuels. The Paris deal also represents a very different approach to Kyoto, said Matt McGrath on BBC News online. Whereas Kyoto offered a “top-down solution”, under which the UN imposed mandatory targets, Paris invites states to come up with their own targets and their own solutions. This “bottom up” approach could work. The irony is that this “pledge and review” concept was first suggested back in 2007 by George W. Bush.

Too bad the world didn’t adopt it then or, better still, at the first climate conference in 1995, said Bill McKibben in *The New York Times*. The approach might then have had a chance of working. As it is, there’s no way the Paris deal is going to avert dangerous climate change. The world is set to pass the 1°C warming mark this year, which is already enough to melt ice caps and raise the sea level. To meet the 1.5°C target “would require breakneck action of a kind most nations aren’t really contemplating”. Even the 2°C limit is looking unrealistic at this point.

Let’s face facts, said Dan Riedlhuber in *The Conversation*. The idea that the world is going to be able to find cheaper green substitutes for every use of fossil fuels – from heating and jet fuel to fertilisers and cement manufacture – before warming reaches 2°C is “pure fantasy”. The only “feasible” way we’re going to stabilise the climate now is by devising new methods to take carbon out of the atmosphere. A huge investment in carbon capture technologies will have to be part of the mix, agreed Tim Flannery in *The Independent* on Sunday. At the same time, we urgently need to phase out the burning of coal and find alternative fuels for aviation and shipping. To achieve that goal by mid-century may sound like fantasy, but just consider “the changes that occurred between 1915 and 1950 – from the horse-drawn to the nuclear era”.

What next?

The ambitious climate change targets agreed in Paris will carry a hefty price tag, reports *The Independent*. Research by the International Energy Agency found that countries will need to spend some \$16.5trn over the next 15 years to meet their pledges. Most of the money would go on replacing coal and gas-fired power stations with emissions-free sources of energy such as wind, solar and nuclear.

Britain is committed to cutting emissions by 80% (from 1990 levels) by 2050, says *The Daily Telegraph*. The growth of wind and solar power is forecast to lead to a new model of energy use in which UK household tariffs will vary depending on how sunny and windy it is.

THE WEEK

It was the most highly anticipated

film release of the year, and according to the *Daily Telegraph* it brought their critic to tears three times. Following the global premiere, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* was released in the UAE last Friday, with the question on many people’s lips – with new director JJ Abrams at the helm and under Disney ownership – would the new film live up to the legacy of George Lucas? Our cover story looks at the media reaction to the new release last week (see Talking points, page 25).



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Disappearance of “China’s Warren Buffett”

“We are still in shock,” declared a source at Fosun Group, shortly after the company’s founding chairman Guo Guangchang “disappeared” last week. So was much of China, said Fergus Ryan in The Guardian. The billionaire known as China’s Warren Buffett is by far “the most high-profile business figure to be caught up in the country’s anti-corruption drive”, which has hitherto mainly targeted senior officials and members of the military. Shares in Fosun, China’s largest privately held conglomerate – whose assets include Club Med, Cirque du Soleil and the New York landmark One Chase Manhattan Plaza – were suspended in Hong Kong. After four days “assisting” police with their enquiries, Guo was released and no charges were filed against him; trading in Fosun shares resumed on Monday. But his reappearance has done nothing to solve the mystery of why he vanished in the first place.



Guo: “lives modestly” and practises t’ai chi

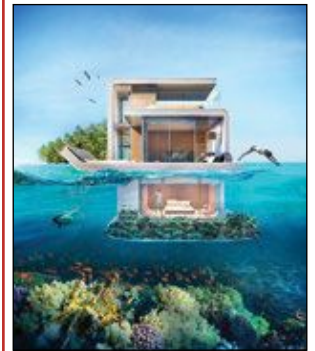
Guo, 48, who founded Fosun with three classmates while at university in Shanghai, is China’s 17th-richest person, with a net worth of some \$7bn. But he “looms larger than most of his peers on the international stage because of his aggressive acquisition strategy”, said the FT. Among his many interests in the leisure sector, for instance, is a 5% stake in Thomas Cook; and he’s recently been ramping up Fosun’s presence in insurance and banking. Planned European

acquisitions – including the \$228m purchase of the German private bank Hauck & Aufhäuser, and a separate tilt at the London merchant bank BHF Kleinwort Benson – now face “an uncertain outlook”. Under Guo, Fosun has been “a deal-making juggernaut”, said Rachel Morarjee on Reuters Breakingviews. His return to work may signal that it’s back to business as usual – as was the case when the head of the China unit of Man Group went AWOL in September. But the affair “is a stark reminder of the risks of investing alongside China’s entrepreneurs”.

“Wealth comes with a health warning in China,” said Patti Waldmeir in the FT. But Guo, who lives modestly, practices t’ai chi and is “a devout believer” in the virtues of Eastern philosophy, “thought he had a secret antidote”. “People asked why I am not worried,” he said in an interview last year. “You have to believe that as long as you have made no mistake, the government will not mess with you.” His detention may be linked with that of Wang Zongnan, the head of Bright Food (the company that bought Weetabix), who was recently sentenced to 18 years for bribery and embezzlement. We may never know. But the message sent out by this affair could not be more damaging to Guo, to his company and to China. “The government can ‘mess’ with you. However good you are.”

Boring but important

The Floating Seahorses or underwater villas to be built in The World islands have been certified as “safe and comfortable for users and for the environment” said GulfNews.com. The Floating Seahorses are three-storey holiday homes where the first level is submerged in water giving it an underwater view, docked in the marina of The Heart of Europe in The World islands project. The first Seahorse, which is being built in Dubai Maritime City, is “expected to hit the waters this month.” “This villa ... we deem it to be a ship. Environmentally speaking, we took more than five months to study the safety and the environmental [impact] of these kinds of units [before proceeding],” Captain Waleed Al Nahdi, Chief Commercial Officer of Tasneef, the preeminent Classification Society in the UAE.



SOURCE: THE FLOATING SEAHORSE.COM

Only in the UAE

“The world is used to seeing Cristiano Ronaldo fly down the wing for Spanish footballing giants Real Madrid. But now he’ll be flying at a rather higher altitude – this time on the side of an Emirates Airbus A380,” said The National. The Dubai carrier, which sponsors Real as well as a number of other top European clubs, has unveiled livery on the world’s largest passenger plane starring Ronaldo, as well as teammates Gareth Bale, Sergio Ramos, James Rodriguez, Karim Benzema and Marcelo. The aircraft is scheduled to travel to Hong Kong, Amsterdam and Frankfurt this week, “giving Real Madrid fans in these countries a chance to snap a picture of the aircraft.” Emirates said the decal “will stay on the aircraft for six months traversing the globe to Emirates’ 36 A380 destinations”.

Good week for:

Destination Dubai, after *Star Trek Beyond* had the biggest budget of any film to shoot in Dubai, confirmed Jamal Al Sharif, chairman of Dubai Film and TV Commission, on Monday. “*Mission: Impossible* set a benchmark at \$22 million. This [*Star Trek Beyond*] is somewhere around \$32 million dollars, plus soft incentives. This is just the Dubai budget,” he said.

Singer Ed Sheeran, who has announced he is “taking a break” from social media as he is “seeing the world through a screen and not my eyes”. Writing on his Instagram account, the singer explained he was “taking the opportunity of not having to be anywhere... to travel the world”. Sheeran has 16 million Twitter and 5.5 million Instagram followers.

Bad week for:

South African President Jacob Zuma, who named his second finance minister in four days after criticism from business groups and his own party, sparking a rebound in the rand and bonds. Zuma reappointed Pravin Gordhan following market turmoil that sent the rand to record lows and bond yields to the highest in seven years.

South Korean pop girl band Oh My Girl, after eight members were detained and denied entrance to the United States “because officials thought that they were sex workers”, said Gulf News. WM Entertainment said that officials were suspicious because of the large amount of props and clothing that the band had brought to the US.

Poll watch



Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump is still leading, even after he called for the temporary ban of Muslims entering into the US, said Breitbart.com. The new Reuters/Ipsos poll has Trump leading the Republican field with 35% support, followed by Ben Carson, with 12%. Senator Ted Cruz and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush are at 10%. Incidentally, most Republicans surveyed also didn’t find Trump’s policy offensive. Only 29% of Republicans found the remarks bigoted, whereas 64% said they didn’t see any offence in them. Democrats polled found Trump’s comments controversial, with almost three-quarters (72%) saying they were offensive.

Damascus, Syria

Taxing the shawarma now: More than four years into a grinding civil war, the Syrian government is scraping the barrel to boost its revenues with everything from taxes on shawarma sandwiches to telephone lines, reports The National. "Perhaps the most tangible evidence is the weakness of the Syrian pound, currently trading at 390 to the US dollar, compared to around 60 before the war and 240 just a year ago. When the uprising against president Bashar Al Assad's regime began, the governor of the central bank announced the country had reserves of some \$18 billion. But experts say much of that has been used up, though it is impossible to know how much remains."

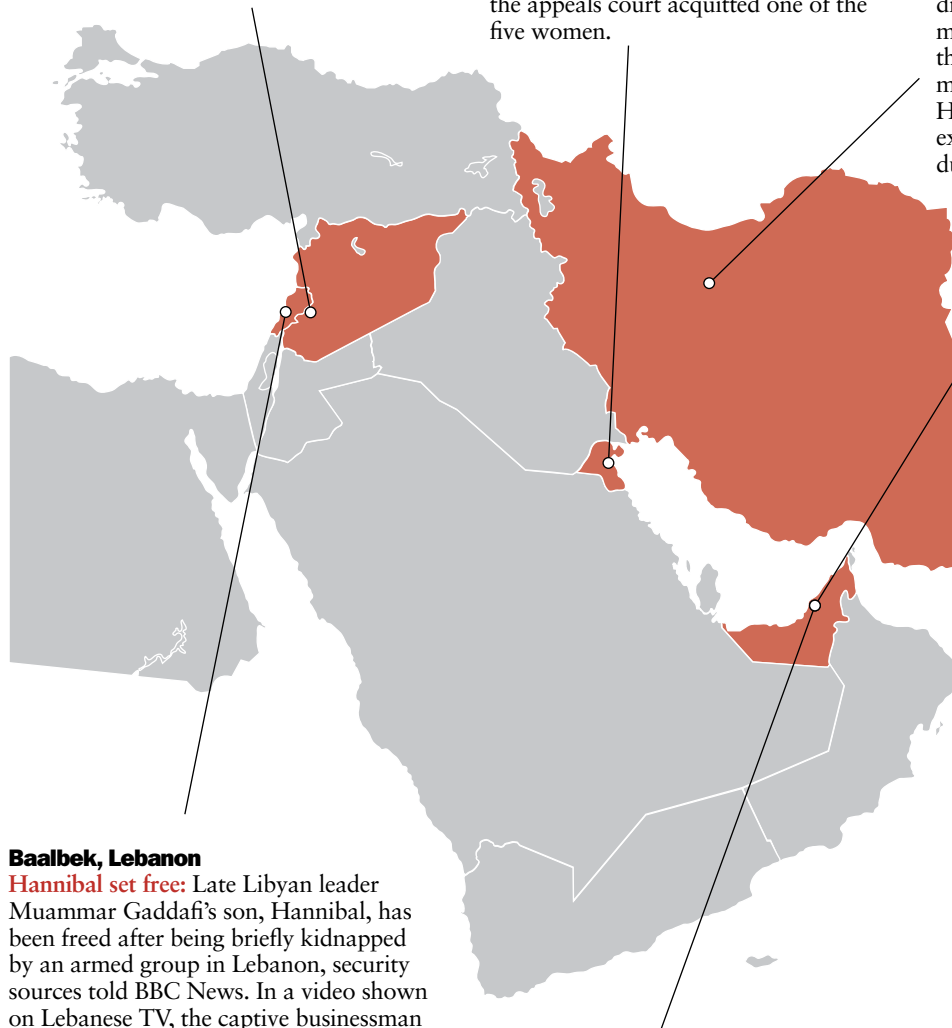
Kuwait City, Kuwait

Death penalty for ISIL mosque bombers: Kuwait's appeals court Sunday upheld the death penalty for the main organiser of the bombing of a Shi'ite mosque claimed by ISIL that killed 26 people, said AFP. The court, however, reduced the death sentence handed out to "the alleged leader of ISIL in Kuwait, Fahad Farraj Muhareb", to 15 years in prison. A lower court in September issued the death penalty to Muhareb and Abdulrahman Sabah Saud, who drove the suicide bomber to the mosque site on 26 June. It also slapped terms of between two and 15 years to eight others, including five women, and acquitted 14 others. In Sunday's ruling, the appeals court acquitted one of the five women.



Tehran, Iran

Choosing a new order? A group of Iranian clerics is examining potential candidates to be the next Supreme Leader, former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani has said, "breaking a taboo of talking publicly about succession in the Islamic republic", said The Guardian. The committee is compiling a list of qualified people to step into the role when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (pictured) is no more. Even after Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 75, was diagnosed and had surgery for prostate cancer last year, public discussion about a successor never gained momentum in official circles "because of the risk of being seen to undermine Iran's most powerful figure". Moderate president Hassan Rouhani and his allies are expected to win parliamentary election due to the nuclear deal.



Baalbek, Lebanon

Hannibal set free: Late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's son, Hannibal, has been freed after being briefly kidnapped by an armed group in Lebanon, security sources told BBC News. In a video shown on Lebanese TV, the captive businessman was seen appealing for more information concerning the 1978 disappearance of the prominent Lebanese Shia cleric Musa al-Sadr. He was freed in the city of Baalbek and dispatched to Beirut, police told AP. The 40-year-old former playboy was given sanctuary in Oman in 2012. His father Muammar was overthrown by rebels in a 2011 uprising. Al-Sadr, one of the most prominent Shia clerics of the 20th century, disappeared along with two others during a trip to Libya in 1978. While the former deceased Libyan despot Muammar Gaddafi denied any involvement in his disappearance, many suspect him of having orchestrated it.

Dubai, UAE

From dust to dust: Dust in the UAE comes from two deserts – the Sahara and Rub' Al Khali, a new study by Masdar Institute of Science and Technology researchers has found, said Gulf News. The research, "which studies where the UAE's dust is coming from and how it affects the atmosphere", is the country's first comprehensive dust climatology study that provides information for developing smarter climate models needed to support sustainable development, it was announced on Tuesday. The research so far tracked the origins of the dust to two deserts – the Sahara and Rub Al Khali or Empty Quarter, the world's largest sand desert encompassing most of the southern third of the Arabian Peninsula.

Dubai, UAE

Daylight robbery: In a daylight robbery, masked gunmen raided a money exchange in Karama before fleeing with a huge amount of cash on Sunday, an exchange official and an eyewitness told Gulf News. A senior official of Al Razouki Exchange, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "The robbers entered the exchange's Karama branch at about 4.30pm and within a minute decamped with all the day's cash, which could be around \$2,70,000. A CCTV camera showed that the suspects were inside for approximately a minute. Following the incident, the general manager of the branch called the police and they are still assessing the situation." A police comment was not immediately available, but a 50-year-old Pakistani restaurant worker said five men armed with pistols rushed in to exchange. "It was all over in around five minutes. They sprayed the counter staff and customers with a gas that made us teary and start coughing. One of the gunmen was shouting 'hurry, hurry' to his partners in English. I couldn't make out his accent," he added.

Karlsruhe, Germany**Merkel vows to cut migrant numbers:**

Angela Merkel appears to have headed off the rumbling dissent within her own party over her handling of the migrant crisis, by agreeing to cut migrant numbers – though without citing an exact target. On the eve of this week's CDU party conference, the German chancellor agreed to support a motion in favour of “reducing the number of refugees appreciably” to avoid Germany being “overwhelmed in the long run”. She also said that multiculturalism is “a lie” – and that newcomers must “respect our law and traditions” and learn German. At least a million refugees and migrants have arrived in Germany so far this year, and another million are predicted to follow next year. In her speech, which was met with a seven-minute standing ovation, Merkel also delivered an uncompromising call for Europe to keep its borders open, and said that helping refugees was “no more or less than a moral imperative”.

Madrid, Spain

Sexist advert banned: Spain's advertising watchdog has banned a TV campaign for the cleaning product Cillit Bang, because its adverts feature 32 women cleaning and wiping their homes – but no men. And the accompanying slogan urging viewers to go and buy the product addresses them in the Spanish feminine plural form, implying that domestic chores are a purely female concern (in Spanish, the masculine plural is used when referring to a group of both sexes). In one advert, the actress says she is grateful to Cillit Bang for letting her clean her bathroom so quickly, as it gives her more time to spend with her children. Such advertising, said a spokesman for the standards board, “violates the foundation of our legal system and helps perpetuate gender violence”. Reckitt Benckiser, the firm that makes Cillit Bang, told The Independent that it was sorry for the unintentionally sexist campaign, and that it “defends gender equality in all areas”.

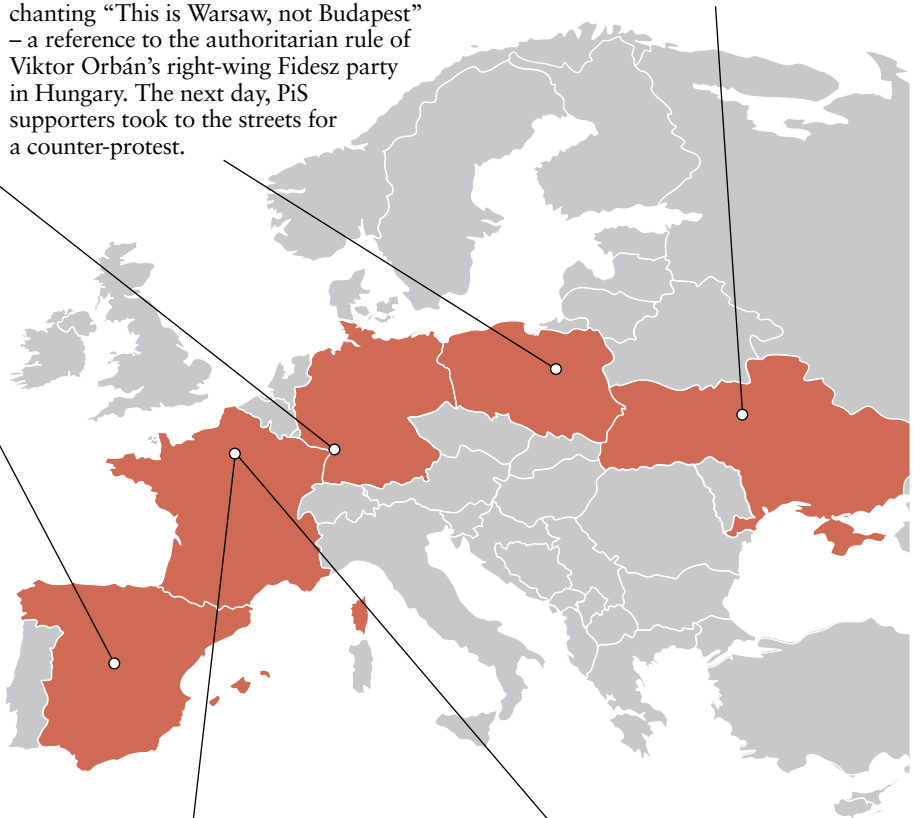
Warsaw, Poland

“Dictatorship” fears: Opponents and defenders of Poland's new right-wing government held rival protest marches in Warsaw last weekend, amid a brewing constitutional crisis over the government's tightening control of state institutions. Since coming to power in a surprise election win in October, the Law and Justice party (PiS) has dramatically defied Poland's top constitutional court: President Andrzej Duda, a PiS ally, refused to appoint three judges chosen by the previous parliament, and instead appointed five new judges sympathetic to the PiS's highly conservative agenda. Critics say Duda's actions are illegal, and have called for his resignation. On Saturday, tens of thousands of people marched through the capital, some of them chanting “This is Warsaw, not Budapest” – a reference to the authoritarian rule of Viktor Orbán's right-wing Fidesz party in Hungary. The next day, PiS supporters took to the streets for a counter-protest.

**Kiev, Ukraine**
MPs brawl:

Tensions at the top of Ukrainian politics between the president, Petro Poroshenko (pictured), and Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk boiled over into a mass brawl in parliament when an MP handed

the PM a bunch of roses, lifted him up and tried to carry him away from the speaker's podium. This prompted a brawl involving dozens of MPs. Some supporters of Poroshenko want to oust the PM, whom they accuse of corruption.

**Paris, France**

Far-right defeated: The National Front (FN) bandwagon was brought to a halt in the second round of France's regional elections last Sunday – as tactical voting and a massive turnout by supporters of mainstream parties combined to block the far-right party from winning control of any of the 13 regions up for grabs. The FN, which has attempted to “detoxify” its brand under the leadership of Marine Le Pen (pictured), topped the first-round polls in six regions, suggesting that it was on the verge of a historic breakthrough. But in last weekend's second round, President Hollande withdrew his Socialist candidates in two key regions, including those contested by Le Pen and her niece, Marion, to clear the field for Nicolas Sarkozy's centre-right Republican party. The FN duo were duly defeated. An angry and visibly upset Le Pen said that her party's voters had been “disenfranchised in the most indecent of ways by a campaign of lies and disinformation decided in the golden palaces of the Republic”. However, the party's strong showing – 6.8 million votes, giving it 27% of the total and putting it two points behind the Socialists – suggests she remains a threat to both of the main parties in the 2017 presidential election. The week brought some happier news for Le Pen: on Tuesday she was acquitted of inciting hatred against Muslims at a campaign rally in Lyon in 2010.

Aubervilliers, Paris, France

Fake terror attack: A nursery school teacher sparked panic in Paris on Monday by claiming he had been stabbed in his classroom by an ISIL fanatic. But police soon began to suspect his story, and he later admitted he had made it up and knifed himself, in the neck and side. The man, who has not been named, said he'd been attacked while alone in the classroom by a man clad in overalls and a balaclava, who shouted: “This is for Daesh [Arabic acronym for ISIL]. This is a warning.” Within hours, education minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem had visited the scene, in the suburb of Aubervilliers, and vowed to improve security at all French schools. The teacher's motives are unclear, but he may have been trying to draw attention to a threat made last month in ISIL's French-language magazine, Dar al-Islam: it urged its followers to kill teachers in France, describing them as “enemies of Allah”.



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Des Moines, Iowa

Cruz in front in Iowa: Senator Ted Cruz of Texas has surged to a ten-point lead over Donald Trump among Republican voters in Iowa, according to a new poll. The Iowa caucus will send a mere 1% of delegates to the Republican convention in July, but as the first state to nominate its delegates – the caucus will take place on 1 February – it is often seen as a bellwether. The Des Moines Register's poll put Cruz on 31%, and Trump on 21%. A Fox News poll gave Cruz only a two-point lead, while a third poll put Trump slightly ahead – but all three polls agreed that it's going to be a two-man race in Iowa, causing alarm in mainstream Republican circles. Cruz is a right-wing populist with views similar to Trump's. He rejects the scientific consensus on climate change; has a hard-line stance on immigration; and is vehemently against gun control. Trump this week described him as acting like "a little bit of a maniac".

Los Angeles, California

School shutdown: The city of Los Angeles shut down its entire public school system on Tuesday – more than 1,000 schools, catering to 640,000 pupils – after receiving an emailed threat purporting to come from jihadi terrorists overseas. LA schools superintendent Ramon Cortines said that the threat had mentioned rucksacks and packages, and was directed not at specific schools but "at school students" in general. More than 2,700 police officers searched all the city's schools before declaring them safe. City officials in New York later revealed that they had received the same emails – but had quickly concluded that they were a hoax.

Springfield, Massachusetts

Cosby countersues: Bill Cosby has launched a countersuit against seven of the more than 50 women who have accused him of sexual assault and rape. The seven women are all party to a civil suit, filed in 2014 in Springfield, Massachusetts, that accuses the 78-year-old comedian and actor of assault, libel and slander, for calling them liars when they first came forward. Many of his other alleged victims have made similar claims, but Cosby says "opportunistic" and false allegations by these women in particular lost him specific TV deals. This July, a 2005 legal statement by Cosby came to light in which he'd admitted obtaining sedatives in the 1970s to give to women before having sex with them. He admitted giving it to at least one woman.

**Fort Bragg, North Carolina**

Bergdahl facing jail: Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, the US soldier captured by the Taliban after leaving his post – and later freed in exchange for five Taliban detainees – is to be court-martialled for desertion and misconduct. The decision, by the head of Army Forces Command at Fort Bragg, overrules the finding of an initial investigation that he should not face jail time or be punitively discharged. Bergdahl (pictured) faces up to five years in prison for desertion. But if convicted

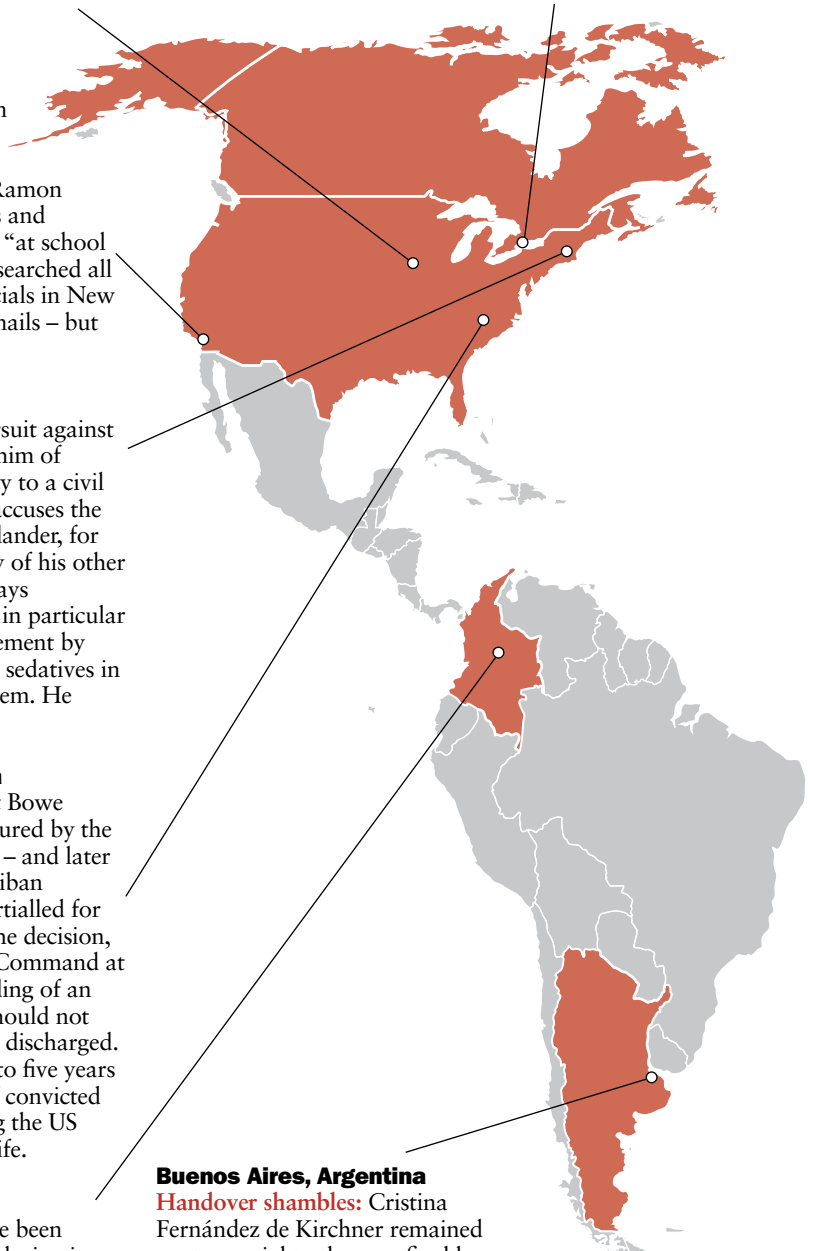
of "misbehaviour before the enemy" – by endangering the US troops sent to search for him – he could be jailed for life.

Bogotá, Colombia

Farc "forced abortions": Scores of female fighters have been subjected to forced abortions by the Farc rebel group during its decades-long insurgency against the Colombian state, according to the country's top prosecutor. Attorney general Eduardo Montealegre Lynett said evidence from 150 ex-fighters showed that Farc's abortion policy "was based on forcing a female fighter to abort so as not to lose her as an instrument of war". He is now seeking the extradition from Spain of a nurse, Héctor Arboleda Albeidis Buitrago, who is alleged to have performed more than 100 forced abortions for the group. Women and girls are thought to make up almost a third of Farc fighters, but the group has always denied forcing them to terminate pregnancies.

**Toronto, Canada**

Welcomed by PM: Canada's new prime minister, Liberal Party leader Justin Trudeau, has personally welcomed the first of 25,000 Syrian refugees due to arrive in the country between now and February. Last week 163 Syrians touched down in Toronto on a Canadian military plane, and the PM was on hand to greet the first two families to come through immigration processing (pictured). Trudeau, elected in October, has reversed his conservative predecessor Stephen Harper's policy on refugees. Canada was "showing the world how to open our hearts", he said (see Best articles, page 21).

**Buenos Aires, Argentina**

Handover shambles: Cristina Fernández de Kirchner remained controversial to the very final hours of her presidency last week – boycotting her successor's inauguration ceremony after he was obliged to go to court to clarify exactly when her term ended. The new centre-right president, Mauricio Macri, accused Kirchner of indulging in a last-minute spending spree, and of making key appointments designed to make the transition harder. When Kirchner then insisted that the presidential handover be held in Congress rather than at the Casa Rosada presidential palace, as Macri preferred, he secured a court ruling that Kirchner's term ended at midnight on Wednesday, giving her no say over the ceremony the next day.

Banjul, Gambia

Islamic republic: Mainland Africa's smallest nation, The Gambia, has declared itself an Islamic republic. Its president, Yahya Jammeh, who seized power in 1994 and took the country out of the Commonwealth two years ago, explained that he wanted to distance it from its colonial past: "Gambia's destiny is in the hands of the Almighty Allah," he said. Muslims form 90% of the population of 1.9 million in the former British protectorate, which is almost entirely surrounded by Senegal. Human rights campaigners say arbitrary detention and torture are a routine part of Jammeh's regime, but he insists other religions have nothing to fear. "Christians will be given their due respect," Jammeh said. "The way of celebrating Christmas will continue. I have not appointed anyone as an Islamic policeman. The way women dress is not your business."



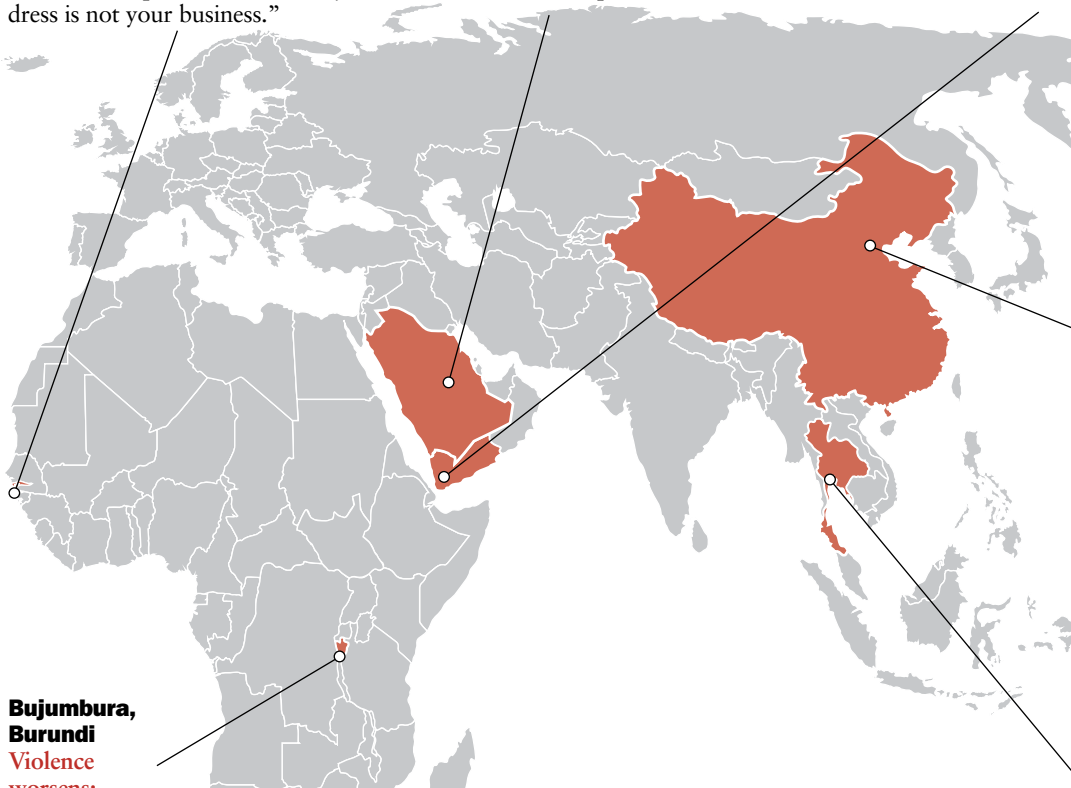
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Women elected:

At least 17 women have won seats on local municipal councils in groundbreaking elections in Saudi Arabia. It was the first time in Saudi history that women had been allowed either to stand in elections, or to vote in them. The remaining 2,100 seats on the councils, which have no legislative powers, were won by men: many women complained that bureaucratic hurdles had prevented them from taking part. Only about 130,000 women managed to register to vote, compared with 1.3 million men.

Sana'a, Yemen

Ceasefire and peace talks: A UN-brokered seven-day ceasefire in the intense fighting which has gripped Yemen since the spring came into effect on Tuesday, as peace talks between the warring parties began in Switzerland. Houthi Shia fighters captured Sana'a, Yemen's capital, in September 2014, and still control much of the west of the country. They are allied to the former dictator Ali Abdullah Saleh and backed by Iran. Opposed to them are the Sunni Muslim forces of Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states, which in March launched a bombing and ground campaign aimed at restoring the internationally recognised president, Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi. Some 6,000 people have been killed in the fighting, which has devastated the already-poor country, depriving millions of people of food and medical supplies.



Beijing, China

Billionaire held:

Guo Guangchang, a billionaire tycoon known as China's Warren Buffett, disappeared for several days last week – having reportedly been taken in for questioning by anti-corruption investigators (see Controversy, page 6). Beijing's much-publicised anti-corruption campaign has already snared a long list of party officials and is now targeting the financial sector. As chairman of one of China's largest conglomerates, Guo has long had links with the country's ruling Communist Party.

Bujumbura, Burundi

Violence worsens:

Burundi has seen its deadliest clashes yet since violence erupted in April over President Pierre Nkurunziza's disputed third term in office. Last Friday at least 87 people were killed when militias attacked three military sites in the capital, Bujumbura; government soldiers later went door to door, dragging out suspects and shooting them dead in the street. Separately, 28 people, including the former defence minister and senior military and police officers, went on trial accused of plotting to oust Nkurunziza, a former Hutu rebel leader. The UN has repeatedly warned that the political and ethnic violence in Burundi, which has the same Hutu and Tutsi ethnic mix as neighbouring Rwanda, risks escalating into a Rwanda-style genocide.

Pretoria, South Africa

Zuma's three finance ministers: South Africa's President Jacob Zuma is facing a barrage of calls to quit, not least from within his own ANC party, for sacking his respected but independent-minded finance minister and replacing him with a little-known loyalist with no experience in finance; and then sacking the newcomer, David van Rooyen, and appointing his third finance minister within a week – Pravin Gordhan, who did the job from 2009 until 2014. The shambolic saga severely rattled the country's financial markets, with the rand falling by 9.5% in the two days after the first sacking, and "raised severe concerns about the financial management of South Africa", according to the FT. Several senior ANC figures have called on Zuma to quit. They include ex-cabinet minister Barbara Hogan, who accused him of "economic sabotage".



Bangkok, Thailand

Man charged with lese-majesty:

A Thai man has been charged with lese-majesty for making a "sarcastic" Facebook posting that disrespected the king's pet dog, Tongdaeng. Factory worker

Thanakorn Siripaiboon, 27, has also been charged, in a military court, for "liking" and sharing an "insulting" image of King Bhumibol Adulyadej (pictured with his pet). The dog charge alone carries a possible jail term of 15 years; overall, Siripaiboon could face up to 37 years. His lawyer said he was shocked that the controversial law was being extended to include a pet.

Cowell's paternal shock

Simon Cowell never wanted to be a dad, said Louise Gannon in the Mail on Sunday. A lifelong bachelor who had dated a string of beautiful women, Cowell was happy focusing on his record company and reality TV shows, and sunning himself on his private yacht. Then one day in 2013 he was hauled out of a business meeting by an assistant and told that Lauren Silverman needed to speak to him urgently. Silverman was pregnant – and to make things messier, she happened to be the wife of Cowell's friend, American businessman Andrew Silverman. "I'm not proud of the circumstances," says Cowell. "I can't hold my head up about it." Cowell was ambivalent about the idea of fatherhood at first. But after going to the first ultrasound scan with Silverman, "something just kicked in," he says. "I felt unbelievably protective of both of them. I just absolutely wanted him. I hadn't known that before." Today, Cowell, 56, is a devoted father to 21-month-old Eric. He admits he doesn't change his son's nappies or feed him, but spends as much time with him as he can. "I'm not a conventional dad, but then I'm not a conventional man. I adore my son. We make each other laugh." That's not to say that he has any regrets about his previous life in the fast lane. "I should

say yes, shouldn't I? I wish I could say yes, but the truth is I've had an amazing time."

Briggs hates Christmas

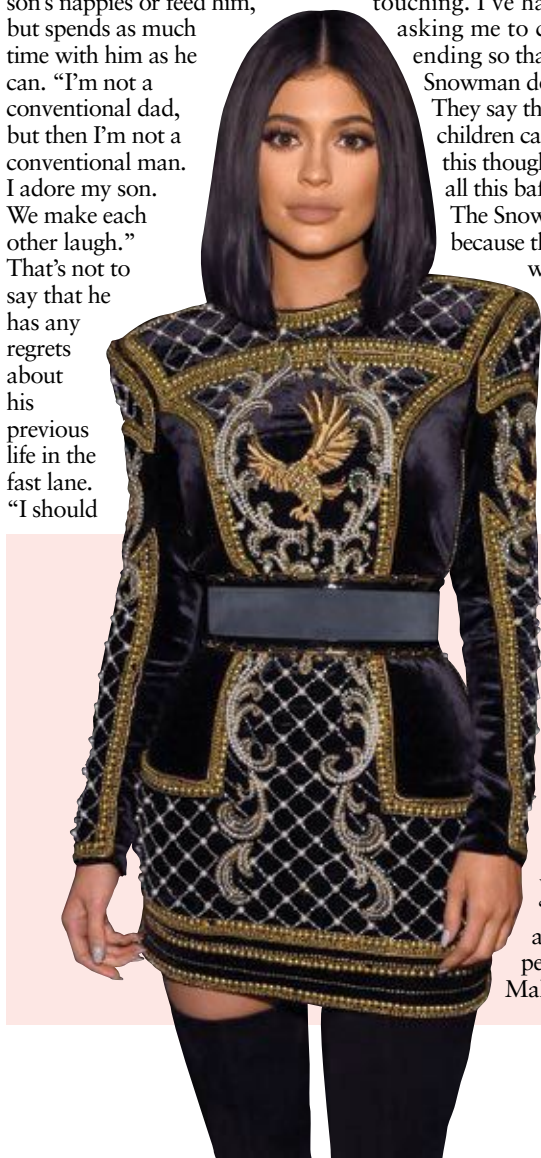
As the creator of *The Snowman*, Raymond Briggs is now forever associated with Christmas, says Lucy Cavendish in The Times. But the 81-year-old illustrator has more in common with another one of his creations – the curmudgeonly Father Christmas who hates his job. "Imagine having to do all that every Christmas," says Briggs. "Bloody awful. My dad was a milkman and he had to go out every day in all weathers and I used to go along sometimes. It is not in any way romantic. It is horrible and boring and not enjoyable. That's how I think Father Christmas would view his job." As for *The Snowman*, far from being a joyous Yuletide fable, he says, it was the product of terrible grief. He wrote it after his mother, father and first wife had all died in quick succession. "It's quite sad and not particularly festive," says Briggs. "I think everyone likes to see it as romantic or touching. I've had people asking me to change the ending so that the Snowman doesn't 'die'. They say that the children can't cope with this thought, but I find all this baffling... The Snowman melts because that is what would logically happen. It's really that simple. It's not a real death. Real death is just painful and miserable."

**Rudolph's comedian gang**

Maya Rudolph is part of a gang of female comedians – among them Kristen Wiig, Tina Fey and Amy Poehler – who started out on *Saturday Night Live*. Although they've all gone on to bigger things – Rudolph starred with Wiig in the hit film *Bridesmaids*, and joins Fey and Poehler in the upcoming *Sisters* – their friendship is a source of ongoing fascination to journalists. "The headlines are always something like, 'Comedy's not a boys' club any more,'" she told Tom Lamont in The Guardian. "goodness, enough already!" Tempting though it is to see their success as part of a wider feminist advance, Rudolph says, "there's a good, healthy, feminist part of me that's like, 'Shut up.' We're just talented. There was never any agenda. The way the tale is told, it's almost like we were writing the Declaration of Independence. Like we all got together in a room. And someone got their quill out. And we decided to make this manifesto, about Ladies Being Funny Too. None of us think that way. We genuinely feel like it's an equal playing field. A unisex playing field". After *Bridesmaids*, she says, everyone asked "the same stupid question: 'Well, did ya ever think that a female comedy could be this successful...?' And I was thinking: nobody here made a female comedy. We made a comedy. If I ever thought there was a chance people wouldn't have liked that movie because we were women, I would have thrown in the towel a long time ago."

Jenner's anxious world

Kylie Jenner often wishes she weren't famous, said Chris Wallace in Interview. Part of reality TV's Kardashian family, Jenner, 18, has spent almost half her life on television, growing up on camera in front of an audience of millions. Fresh out of high school, the teenager already has a 44 million-fan following on Instagram and her own Californian mansion. It's too much scrutiny for a young girl to handle, she admits. "I've already lost parts of me, like, my youth. I feel like I'm going to look back and be like, 'I wish I could've just been a kid and done normal teenage stuff that my friends get to do.'" Jenner has struggled to find genuine friends, and has been taunted and bullied in person and by internet trolls since she was nine. The last year has been particularly turbulent: In April, Jenner's father, Olympic legend Bruce Jenner, made the stunning announcement that he was transitioning from male to female, which has only ratcheted up the attention. "I wake up every morning with the worst anxiety," Kylie says. "I think that there's a bad story about me, and I have to check." One day, says Jenner, she'll seek a more peaceful life. "I'll go off the map. When I'm, like, 30, I'll have a family, and live in Malibu with a farm, and just raise my own chickens."



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The ultimate blackout

A powerful electromagnetic pulse could knock out the power grid and the internet. How serious is the threat?

What is an electromagnetic pulse?

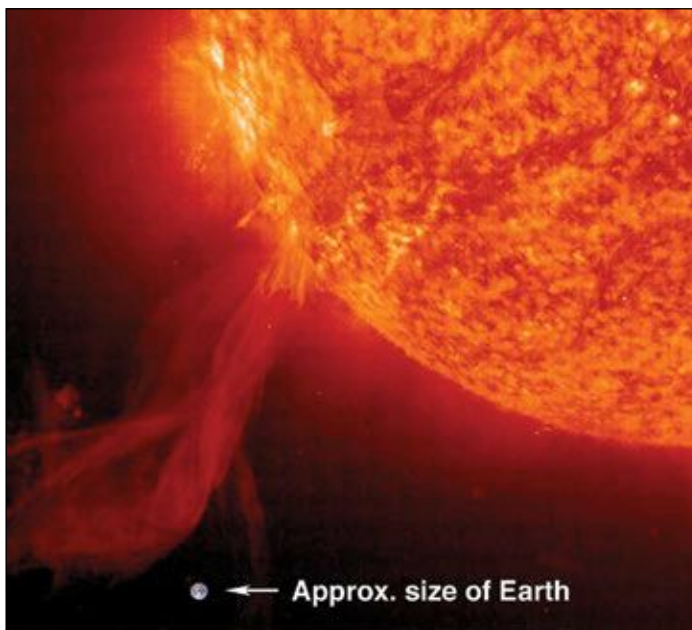
It's a powerful burst of electromagnetic energy with enormous destructive potential. An EMP can arise from natural phenomena, such as lightning strikes, or from human activity, such as a nuclear explosion. What makes EMPs ominous is their potential to wreak havoc with a world that now is utterly dependent on electrical technology. If strong enough, the storm of electrons and other charged particles from an EMP could disrupt the Earth's magnetic field, disable satellites and the internet, ground all commercial aviation, silence telecommunications, and fry much of the electrical grid – catapulting our society back to the 19th century for months or years. Peter Pry, executive director of the federal EMP Task Force on National and Homeland Security, told Congress this year that a major EMP could cause widespread “starvation, disease and societal collapse” that could lead to the deaths of tens of millions of people. The Obama administration recently released a multiagency battle plan to study and defend against what many scientists consider the most likely source of EMPs: solar storms, which Bill Murtagh of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy calls “a real and present danger”.

What are solar storms?

Huge eruptions of magnetically charged plasma from the sun's roiling interior, which explode outward into space. Also known as coronal mass ejections, moderate solar storms occur fairly regularly and harmlessly, sometimes causing spectacular auroras that illuminate the sky over the North and South poles. But even typically benign solar storms generate energy that “dwarfs our planet's entire nuclear arsenal”, says astronomer Phil Plait. And what of a massive event? “People sometimes ask me if anything in astronomy actually worries me,” says Plait. “Something like this is near the top of the list.” With good reason: experts say there is a 12% chance that a monster solar storm will strike Earth within the next decade. A National Academy of Sciences study concluded that a storm of that scope could cause \$2 trillion of damage in the first year of recovery alone, 20 times the cost of Hurricane Katrina.

Has such a storm ever hit Earth?

Yes, several times. The last one, dubbed the Carrington Event (see box), hit in 1859. A far smaller solar flare in 1989 sent a pulse of radiation that left six million people in Quebec without power for up to nine hours. Much more alarming was a solar superstorm that barely missed Earth in July 2012. Astronomers say the sun spewed out a huge magnetic cloud that tracked straight through our



Solar flare with the Earth in scale to demonstrate the immense size of this solar phenomenon

planet's orbit. Fortunately for civilisation, Earth was elsewhere in its path around the sun at the time, but had the storm roared through nine days earlier, a worst-case scenario would have occurred. Satellites involved in crucial global communications (including GPS) would have been ruined, large electrical transformers would have been destroyed, and ATMs would have stopped functioning. The internet would have been disabled on a massive scale. Most people wouldn't even have been able to flush toilets, which rely on electric pumps. Three years later, “we would still be picking up the pieces”, says astronomer Daniel Baker.

What about man-made EMPs?

It's possible that terrorists or rogue states could detonate a nuclear weapon in the atmosphere and generate

a paralysing EMP. In 2001, Congress established an EMP Commission, which recommended a combination of intelligence gathering, disaster-relief planning, and research to brace for an attack. Former CIA director James Woolsey last year told the House Armed Services Committee that “two-thirds of the US population would likely perish” over a period of years. But many analysts doubt that an EMP attack on the US by, say, North Korea is likely, since it would be taken as an act of war and invite a devastating nuclear response. If a country or terrorist group were going to attack the US with nuclear weapons, most analysts think they would choose to cause more direct and immediate damage by targeting Washington, New York and other population centres.

What protective measures are possible?

The Obama administration has taken steps to replace some aging satellites that monitor space weather and extra-high-voltage transformers that are vulnerable to solar storms. Its new plan also calls for scientists to establish benchmarks for weather events in space, incorporating something like the Richter scale. “We have to understand how big these storms can

be, to know what to protect against,” says Murtagh. The strategy also includes assessing the vulnerability of the power grid, increasing international cooperation, and improving solar-flare forecast technology – a crucial step. But Pry, chairman of the EMP commission, says neither the White House nor Congress is taking the threat seriously enough or acting with appropriate urgency. It would cost about \$2 billion – the amount of foreign aid the US gives to Pakistan – to harden the nation's power grid to minimise the damage from either a nuclear EMP or a solar flare, he says. “If we suspended that [aid] for one year and put it toward hardening the electrical grid,” Pry says, “we could protect the American people from this threat.”

The great solar storm of 1859

On 1 September 1859, British astronomer Richard Carrington noticed a brilliant solar flare over England. In the days that followed, a succession of coronal mass ejections struck Earth head-on. Auroras illuminated night skies from Africa to Hawaii. “The light appeared to cover the whole firmament,” one Baltimore newspaper reported. “[It] had an indescribable softness and delicacy.” The effects were more than aesthetic. EMPs from the storm caused telegraph systems – the “Victorian internet” – to fail throughout North America and Europe; in some cases, lines sparked and offices caught fire. Otherwise, the damage was minimal; after all, that was long before humanity became utterly reliant on electronics – as it was when history repeated itself 153 years later. “The July 2012 storm was in all respects at least as strong as the Carrington Event,” says astronomer Daniel Baker. “The only difference is, it missed.”

Middle East: Paris terror attacks defame Islam

Abdullah Al Alyan

Oman

The recent terror attacks that killed 130 people in Paris were crimes against Islam and humanity and are intended to defame the Islamic religion, says Omani columnist Abdullah Al Alyan. He believes that using violence to force non-Muslims to turn to Islam is a crime that is unacceptable in any religion. In the article he argues that the terrorists who struck in Paris violated all religions and ethics by killing innocent people. "These terror attacks are a flagrant violation of Islamic values and all other heavenly religions. What happened in Paris completely violates religious, ethical and human values as the victims were innocent civilians who had nothing to do with international politics. These acts defame Islam, which is strictly against the killing of others even if they are not Muslims," he writes. "Islam is based on tolerance and not on violence. The problem is that some of those who carried out the attacks in Paris lived in Europe for a long time. How these French and Belgian citizens could go on such a rampage against innocent people at cafés and restaurants is unfathomable."



UAE: Media campaigns target Saudi-UAE ties

Salim Humaid

Okaz

Regional and global media have tried to mar relations between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over the past few weeks over their involvement in Yemen and other issues. However, says UAE columnist Salim Humaid, these campaigns will not succeed. He describes such campaigns as attempts to "fish in troubled waters" with the aim of driving a wedge between the two Gulf oil producers, who are the main pillars of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In an article published by the Saudi Arabic language daily Okaz, he stresses that Saudi-UAE relations are strong and unlikely be affected by such hostile campaigns. "Those who spread lies and rumours about relations between Saudi Arabia and the UAE in some regional and global newspapers are a bunch of dreamers filled with grudge and hatred. Their attempts will not succeed," he argues. "We, as GCC citizens, have faith in the Saudi and UAE policies and their strong relationship at official and grassroots levels. This relationship will not be affected by such ridiculous lies as the two leaderships are aware of the significance of their relations for the GCC and the entire Arab world. We will remain proud of Saudi Arabia's leadership and people, and its pioneering role in the region."

Gulf: Dollar peg keeps GCC economy strong

Ali Towfiq Al Sadeq

Alhayat

A decision by Gulf Arab oil producers to keep their currencies linked to the US dollar is positive for their economies. Oil is officially priced in US dollars and the currency has been strong most of the time, says an Arab analyst. In an article published by the Saudi Arabic language daily Alhayat, Ali Towfiq Al Sadeq cites forecasts by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that the greenback will remain strong in the near and medium term.



He notes that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) currencies, except the Kuwaiti dinar that is pegged to a basket of currencies, have remained strong against most other major world currencies due to the peg to the US dollar. He adds that the dollar peg has also mitigated the cost of GCC imports from countries whose currencies are not pegged to the US dollar and this has helped member states keep their inflation rates under control. "The GCC and other countries whose currencies are pegged to the US dollar should study the overall effects of the strong US currency on their economies. With forecasts by the IMF that US growth will exceed that of Europe and Japan, the US dollar will remain strong in the foreseeable future. The GCC countries should take this into consideration as a strong dollar benefits their economies."

Iraq: Turkish troops in Mosul for possible partition

Mohammed Nuriddeen

Al Khaleej

Turkey has sent troops to the Northern Iraqi city of Mosul in anticipation of any plans to partition the Arab country. This will prevent Mosul from being controlled by Kurds or Shiite Muslims, says a Lebanese columnist. Mohammed Nuriddeen believes that Ankara wants Mosul to be the capital of a Muslim Sunni state in case Iraq is divided under a federal political system. In an article published in Al Khaleej, he argues that Turkey looks at Iraq "with a suspicious eye" and considers any plan to divide the Arab nation against Ankara's interests. "Turkey sent troops to Mosul because it does not want it to be part of a Kurdish state in case Iraq is partitioned into federal entities. Nor does it want Mosul to be part of a Shiite state. It is clear that Turkey wants Mosul to be the capital of a third state that is dominated by Sunnis," the writer says. "In turn, the Arab countries believe that Ankara's plan will expand Turkey's influence in their region and that is why the Arab League condemned the Turkish intervention in North Iraq and called on Ankara to withdraw its troops immediately. This Arab reaction seems to be the beginning of a new stage that will put an end to Turkey's interference in the affairs of Iraq, Syria and other Arab countries."

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Look who isn't coming to dinner

Ezra Klein

Vox.com

Swing voters are a “dying breed” in America, says Ezra Klein. Over the past four elections, the average rate of party switching was just 6.2% – about half the average rate from 1952 to 1980. This polarisation isn't healthy for politics: it means parties put all their energy into turning out their base and are “more insulated from the effects of poor governance”. But it's hard to see how the trend can be reversed given its self-reinforcing nature. In 1960, only 5% of Republicans and 4% of Democrats said they would be upset if their son or daughter married someone affiliated with the other party. Today, those figures are 49% and 33%. Partisanship is mutating into “a form of political identity that reaches into almost every aspect of our lives”, from where we live to whom we love. In one recent study, Democrats and Republicans showed instant, automatic negative bias against people of the other party – more bias, in fact, than whites show against blacks or vice versa. It's the one form of bigotry that is still acceptable, with entire TV networks devoted to vilifying one or other party. The irony is that, despite all this, voters still think of themselves as open-minded. “More Americans than ever are identifying as independent” – even as their voting becomes ever more predictably partisan.

Gun rights are not absolute

Sonja West

Slate.com

Lots of Americans believe that “regulating guns in virtually any way violates the Second Amendment”, said Sonja West. They are unquestionably wrong. “Constitutional rights are not absolute”, and all are subject to numerous restrictions. Take the First Amendment guaranteeing freedom of speech. Your speech is not protected if it contains a threat of violence, is deemed to be obscene, reveals classified or military secrets, plagiarises, or falsely damages someone's reputation. In its 2008 Heller decision, the Supreme Court held that individuals have a right to possess firearms, but in his majority opinion, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote: “The right secured by the Second Amendment is not unlimited”, and said the ruling should not “cast doubt on long-standing prohibitions on the possession of firearms” or laws that impose “conditions and qualifications on the commercial sale of arms”. Despite NRA propaganda, in other words, nothing in Heller or the Constitution stops the government from adopting “sensible gun regulations”, such as universal background checks, bans on military-style assault weapons and large-capacity magazines, or laws prohibiting the sale of guns to violent offenders, the mentally ill, or terrorists. Those decisions are up to us.



Are 14-year-olds “the founders”?

Nathan Heller

The New Yorker

The post-millennial Generation Z, “a demographic that has never known a world without smartphones, wants to be known as the founders”, said Nathan Heller in *The New Yorker*. That's according to MTV – “the semi-official guardian of America's youth culture”. The music channel carried out a nationwide survey interviewing more than 1,000 of the country's teenagers. “Most people's reply would be simple: what on earth is Generation Z? Our culture has barely reconciled itself to the millennials – those tight-trousered, Instagramming, passive-ambitious monsters – and already there's a new torrent of demons rattling at the gates.” Perhaps it's best then “that this survey took the decision out of adults' hands and went straight to the young people” – those born from December 2000 onwards. “The verdict was striking, if not a surprise. The kids, it turns out, want to be known as the founders.” According to the reasoning of one teenager who took part in the study they believed that their generation would be “marked as the foundation that really sets off what's most likely going to happen in the next fifty to a hundred years. We are the founders because we are transitioning from before to what's going to come after.” And perhaps “for better or worse – we know it in our hearts and smartphones to be true”.

Can Christie seize his moment?

Gerald Seib

WSJ.com

Chris Christie is having “a moment”, said Gerald Seib. The New Jersey governor's Republican presidential campaign was hobbled from the start by the scandal over traffic jams on the George Washington Bridge, but he's finally getting some traction. The terrorist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino have shifted the focus of the race to terror and security – issues that play to Christie's strengths as a “tough-guy” former federal prosecutor. Christie also turned his demotion to the kids' table for the fourth GOP debate to his benefit, dominating the event in a way he wouldn't have been able to do in the “more crowded session”. His strategy of focusing his campaign almost entirely on New Hampshire appears to be paying off. Christie has secured the “coveted endorsement” of the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, the Granite State's biggest and most influential newspaper, and jumped from ninth to fourth in state polls. Granted, Christie “has a long way to go” – in national polls, he still lags in the single digits, far behind Donald Trump, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz. But if the early leaders falter, he's putting himself in a position for a second look by voters.



GERMANY

We can't take in everybody

Der Spiegel

Chancellor Angela Merkel is backtracking on refugees, said Melanie Amann. In September, in “a moment of unaccustomed conviction”, she told the tens of thousands of refugees stranded in Hungary that they were welcome in Germany, that the right to asylum had no upper limit. Three months later, though, it's becoming apparent that there will have to be a limit. Nearly 10,000 refugees are entering the country every day, and Merkel's coalition partners and cabinet members – whom she did not inform before issuing her blanket invitation – are rebelling. Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière has proposed stricter checks on refugees and limits on family reunification, and other cabinet members support his stance. So now, while Merkel is “publicly sticking to her rhetoric”, she is privately planning a new quota system that would effectively limit the number of people admitted to Germany next year. Her plan calls for the European Union to accept up to 500,000 of the two million mostly Syrian and Iraqi refugees now in Turkey. In turn, Turkey would pledge to stop allowing any other refugees to leave for Greece. But will Europe and Turkey go along? If Merkel's plan fails, “she could be forced to do something she has always ruled out: close Germany's borders and turn away refugees”.

UNITED KINGDOM

The poor are not able to be house proud

The Guardian

Fancy fireplaces. Fitted kitchens. Loft conversions. On the council estate I grew up on, people were mad on home improvements, says Deborah Orr. The fact that they didn't own the properties didn't matter: this was where their families made their lives and invested in the future. The irony is that if you go to that same estate today and see a particularly run-down, shabby house, it's almost certainly a buy-to-let. So much for the theory that people always look after homes better when they own them. The Tories are now threatening to make things worse by limiting the terms of new secure tenancies on council houses to five years. This is a terrible idea. Quite apart from “the emotional hardship of living an insecure life”, why would anyone spend money maintaining their council house or put anything into the local community if they know they may shortly be moved on? When the right-to-buy policy was introduced in 1980, the aim was to create a “property-owning democracy”. But young adults today can neither afford a home nor get council tenancies. “Private landlords rule the roost once more.”



BELGIUM

Where Muslims feel unjustly suspected

De Standaard

Demonising our Muslim population is exactly what the terrorists want us to do, said Bart Sturtewagen. Ever since the Paris terror attacks, apparently planned by Belgians, police have been raiding houses in Brussels' largely Muslim Molenbeek neighbourhood, rounding up the innocent and the suspicious alike. Upstanding Muslim citizens have been harassed and roughly detained, an experience that understandably fills them with anger. “Yes, the breeding ground for radicalisation must be eliminated.” Per capita, this country has sent more citizens to fight in Syria and Iraq than any other European nation. Still, those terrorists are a tiny minority of the Muslims here. Further alienating this already alienated population is hardly in the best interest of peace. How many times can we detain a man, invade his home, frighten his children, before he decides that those who oppose the West have it right after all? It is not the European way to create an atmosphere “in which everyone is suspect until proven innocent”. We run the danger of having our suspicion become a self-fulfilling prophecy. “Living too long under a high threat level changes a society. And not for the better.”

FINLAND

The start of a Universal Basic Income

The Times

Imagine if Britain scrapped the complex benefits system and just gave every adult in the country a handout of, say, \$150 a week, to do with as they wished. The president of Finland, Sauli Niinistö (pictured) is toying with this very idea, says Jenni Russell. In an attempt to kick-start a stagnant economy, the nation's new centre-right government is thinking of running a large-scale trial of the Universal Basic Income (UBI). The system has much to recommend it. At a stroke, it removes all the expensive bureaucracy needed to administer means testing. The welfare trap would be a thing of the past, since “any job you accepted, from giving a single haircut to two weeks' gardening to three months as an IT consultant would mean extra money on top of your weekly allowance”. In a world where work is becoming “ever more unpredictable and precarious”, the UBI could work much better than the West's current welfare systems. But questions remain. At what level would the payment have to be set to be effective and affordable? Would it encourage enterprise or sloth? Over to the Finns. This is one experiment worth watching.



SOUTH AFRICA

Rebranding Mandela as a sellout

Daily Maverick

Just two years after his death, Nelson Mandela's heroic legacy is in jeopardy, said Ranjeni Munusamy. Today's youth, who grew up in post-apartheid South Africa, are frustrated over continued white dominance of the economy and persistent poverty in the townships where most blacks live. They are starting to resent the compromises Mandela made during the transition period and question the concept of racial reconciliation that defined his presidency. Radical socialist leader Julius Malema, 34, who broke from Mandela's ruling African National Congress to form the Economic Freedom Fighters party, has made himself into the spokesman for our frustrated youth. Last week he crossed a line by openly criticising Mandela on a trip abroad. In Oxford, Malema said that Mandela had promised to redistribute land and nationalise resources but "sold out" to his rich white friends and did neither. "The Nelson we celebrate now is a stage-managed Mandela who compromised the principles of the revolution," Malema said. To older ears, such a sentiment is blasphemy, but Malema is tapping into the growing anger "of people stuck in a state of hopelessness". Mandela, once the embodiment of our liberation, is becoming a "symbol of our decay and self-loathing".

CHINA

Chinese smash and grab hacking

Politico.com

When it comes to computer hacking, says Joseph Marks, China is in a class of its own. While Russian hackers are known for their cat-burglar-like precision, their Chinese peers favour the smash-and-grab approach, "breaking in and vacuuming up as much information as possible before they're spotted and flushed out". It's less a form of aggression than "a multi-front effort by a nation of a billion people to play catch-up". Thus, China stands accused of hacking not only plans for the F-35 fighter jet (elements of which have apparently been incorporated into China's J-31 fighter jet), but also mundane know-how such as how to set up a supply chain. "To be fair to China, theft has been part of many nations' development." During the 19th century, US merchants benefited from textile technology lifted from England; US publishers "also routinely sold the work of famous British authors and sold it without permission". China has taken this approach to extremes, though, building "an industrial base so dependent on cyber intrusion that it is not clear how easily the nation will be weaned off it". Under US pressure, Beijing has pledged to eschew hacking, but until it has more to lose than gain from it, it's likely to keep trying to "steal its way to superpower status".



AFRICA

The rise of no-nonsense leaders

Mail & Guardian Africa

Africans are weary of hearing about the excesses of their rulers, says Christine Mungai. Just recently, Swaziland's King Mswati caused an outcry by booking more than 200 hotel rooms for his wives, children and servants at a summit in India. Yet every so often an African leader appears to confound stereotypes. In the weeks since he was elected, Tanzania's new president, John Magufuli, has terrorised lazy and corrupt officials, turning up at their offices unannounced, berating them for their failings, even sacking the management of the main state hospital after finding patients sleeping on floors. Rush hour in Dodoma, the capital, now starts an hour earlier, as civil servants hurry to get to their posts on time. Nor is Magufuli unique. In Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari's reputation as a "no-nonsense disciplinarian" is having a similarly galvanising effect. Long-dead refineries have "sputtered to life"; cities that were lucky to get three hours of electricity a day now get more than 20. It may not last, of course: promising leaders have a way of turning into despised oligarchs. But it does show that with the right touch, the machinery of state in Africa can be surprisingly responsive.

CANADA

Why Syrians don't like Canada

The Globe and Mail

Our new PM, Justin Trudeau, has pledged to bring 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada. So it's "a slap in the face", says Doug Saunders, to learn that when the UN asked refugees living in Jordanian and Lebanese camps, only 6.3% said they wanted to come here. It shouldn't surprise us, though. Canada has always been a bit of "a turn-off". For most of the 19th century, its "stifling Anglican culture and colonial bureaucratic-mindedness were a powerful deterrent to arrivals". Nor did immigration play much part in Canada's population growth during most of the 20th century (excluding the 1910s and 1950s). And today, more money is spent keeping newcomers out than welcoming them in. "The mean-spirited politics of the past decade, the policies denying healthcare to asylum seekers, and the cruel temporary-worker and family-reunification restrictions are well known overseas." Even the British stay clear: in the past decade, fewer of them have settled here than have left. In a survey ranking the nations where British emigrants were the happiest, Canada didn't even make the list. We may think there's something's amiss with foreigners, but it's not they who have a problem, it's Canada – "we think we're a hot date, but we really need to upgrade our Tinder profile".



What the scientists are saying...

A more eco-friendly "palm oil"

A team of researchers is developing a synthetic alternative to palm oil, which could be manufactured on an industrial scale, averting the damage caused by production of the real thing, reports *The Independent*. Derived from the fruit of the palm oil tree, palm oil is widely used in everything from lipsticks to biscuits, and approximately 60 million tonnes of it are produced each year. But owing to global demand, plantations have been expanding rapidly across Southeast Asia – leading to severe deforestation and habitat loss, as well as pollution as fires are used to clear land. The team, at Bath University in the UK, has already produced a thick oil with similar properties to palm oil using a yeast called *Metschnikowia pulcherrima*, which can be grown under non-sterile conditions on a range of agricultural and food waste. Now, they have been given a \$6.68m grant to develop the technology. Their challenge is to find a way to produce it cheaply, in industrial quantities, so that it becomes a serious commercial proposition.



The end of the palm oil trade?

Genes that protect...

Some people are protected from Alzheimer's disease and other forms of mental decline by special genes that evolved to ensure that older people could pass along their wisdom, a new study suggests. It was previously known that a gene variant called CD33 appeared to suppress the formation of beta amyloid proteins in the brain that are associated with Alzheimer's. Scientists compared the level of CD33 found in some humans with

that of our closest evolutionary cousins, chimpanzees, and discovered that people have four times the amount of that protective gene. The researchers also discovered two additional anti-dementia gene variants, dubbed APOE2 and APOE3, that are specific to humans. The researchers speculate that natural selection preserved these mutations to protect older and wiser people from cognitive decline, says ScienceDaily.com. When elderly

people succumb to dementia, the community "loses important sources of wisdom, accumulated knowledge, and culture", explains study co-leader Pascal Gagneux. He said the "information transfer" of the old to the young, as well as the care that grandparents can give children, provides a significant evolutionary advantage.

... and hope for others

Scientists have discovered a chemical compound that, when consumed in drinking water, eliminates the amyloid plaques that build up in the brains of Alzheimer's patients, reports *The Guardian*. In tests in South Korea, the chemical – EPPS – was given to mice which had had plaques injected into their brains, and which were displaying the symptoms of Alzheimer's. A week later, the plaques in the rodents' brains were gone, and they were performing better in maze tests, too. "Our findings clearly support the view that aggregated amyloid beta is the pathological culprit of Alzheimer's," said team leader YoungSoo Kim. However, he stressed that the mice in question – though showing cognitive impairment – had not developed the widespread brain damage suffered by Alzheimer's patients. He does not believe the compound could be used to reverse this damage, but if prescribed early enough, it could, perhaps, halt neurodegeneration and prevent death. The research is in its very early stages, however; it's not even clear if the compound is safe for mice, let alone effective for humans.

Can obesity be inherited?



Women trying to conceive have long been told to eat well, and cut down on toxins, to increase their chances of having a healthy baby; now it seems the same kind of advice could be applicable to men. A study has found that when obese men lose weight, the DNA in their sperm undergoes "epigenetic changes" that may predispose their children to be slim, rather than overweight. The researchers studied the sperm-cell DNA

of six obese men before and after they had gastric bypass surgery, and while they found no genetic change to their genes, they did find thousands of alterations to non-genetic structures in the sperm, reports BBC News online. Team leader Romain Barres, of the University of Copenhagen, speculates that these changes could have been caused by the weight loss – and that they could be passed on to the men's offspring. It is just a hypothesis, but if correct, he said, the message would be that men also need to "take care of themselves before they have children, which is going to be very novel for them".

Being miserable won't kill you

There's no need to cheer up. Being miserable won't kill you after all, reports *The Daily Mail*. In the past, numerous studies have found a link between stress and unhappiness, and reduced lifespan – but it seems these have muddled up cause and effect. Misery doesn't make you ill, say the authors of a new study; illness makes you miserable. The teams, from the Universities of Oxford and New South Wales, examined data from The Million Women Study, which has tracked British women since 1996. Once they'd discounted those who were ill at the start of the study, they were left with 720,000, with an average age of 59. The participants were asked about their happiness and stress levels, before being monitored for 10 years, during which time 30,000 of them died. Initially, the researchers found a link between stress and unhappiness and early death – but once they'd discounted "lifestyle" factors such as smoking, this disappeared. They suggest that being unhappy may make people more inclined to take on unhealthy habits, but that it doesn't directly affect their risk of dying.

Companies: Amazon's delivery drone future

Amazon wants you to know it's still working on that fleet of package-delivering drones, said Jay Greene in The Seattle Times. The ever-ambitious online retailer last week released footage of a new-and-improved delivery drone prototype capable of making deliveries in 30 minutes or less – a service it's calling Prime Air. Part airplane, part helicopter, the drone looks very different from the proof-of-concept Amazon put out two years ago. This unmanned aerial device can rise nearly 400 feet in the air and fly up to 15 miles to deliver its payload right on top of a special Amazon placard placed on the customer's property. And, at least according to Amazon, it could be flying over your yard "in the not-too-distant future".



"Part helicopter, part drone"

The video gives us a tantalising look at "Amazon's broader vision for unmanned vehicles", said Brian Fung on WashingtonPost.com. To meet weight restrictions, Amazon's 50-pound drone has roughly "five pounds of wiggle room for a customer package". That's not a coincidence. The company says as many as 86% of all packages it ships weigh five pounds or less. The question is whether these smaller items are worth flying to customers in 30 minutes or less. An emergency roll of toilet paper might be convenient, but it will certainly cost more via drone. Think of Prime Air as "the anti-Costco – delivering individual products at non-bulk prices". There are still a lot of questions about how Prime Air will work

in real life, said Greg Bensinger and Jack Nicas on WSJ.com. Where exactly will the drones land? And how will they get there safely? The video shows the drone landing in a spacious suburban backyard, conveniently free of obstacles. Reality is more complicated; Amazon will have to develop sophisticated "sense-and-avoid" technology to navigate around trees, telephone wires and even birds. And is everyone going to need an Amazon landing pad? The company could also be crimped by proposed regulations. The FAA is poised to finalise rules that require one operator per drone and ban drones from flying out of sight of their operators or over bystanders.

Drones may not be headed to your doorstep just yet, but you still might find one underneath your Christmas tree, said Stephen Shankland on CNET.com. They are expected to be a popular gift this holiday season, from \$40 toy drones to advanced \$1,000 models aimed at hobbyists. But like Amazon, drone enthusiasts also have a maze of new regulations to navigate. In the US the FAA is considering rules that would require drone owners to register with the federal government "before the maiden flight". Drones are already banned from flying near airports and other sensitive sites. As these flying vehicles go from curiosity to commonplace, the friendly skies "will no longer be quite as freewheeling".

Innovation of the week



We might be living in the digital age, but the average person still uses "the equivalent of nearly six 40-foot trees' worth of paper each year", said Mike Murphy on Qz.com. Epson's new Paper Lab – essentially an on-site recycling plant for your office – could save some of those trees from getting the chop. The hefty machine breaks down used paper and presses it into fresh, new sheets, producing up to 6,720 letter-size sheets in an eight-hour workday. By shrinking the supply chain and removing the need for so much paper to be delivered to offices, the device could help businesses cut their carbon footprint. Epson believes its new device is also the first paper-recycling system that doesn't require water – it usually takes 3 gallons of water to make a single sheet of paper. Paper Lab will go on sale in 2016; Epson has yet to announce the price.

Bytes: What's new in tech

Hackers snatch kids' data



The data of 6.4m children has been compromised in a cyberattack on Hong Kong-based toymaker VTech, said Samuel Gibbs in The Guardian. Hackers accessed the children's private data, as well as that of 4.9m adults, by infiltrating VTech's Learning Lodge app store, used to download games to its popular computer tablets. The stolen information, which wasn't encrypted, includes photos, addresses, chat logs, names and birth dates. This is the largest-ever hack targeting children and will almost certainly bring increased scrutiny on digital toy companies' security measures. Officials in China and the US, including the attorneys general of Connecticut and Illinois, promised to investigate. "This breach is a parent's nightmare of epic proportions", said Seth Chromick, a threat analyst with network security firm vArmour.

YouTube's Hollywood gambit



YouTube is "intensifying its rivalry with Netflix, Amazon and Hulu in the competitive market for online video", said Alistair Barr and Ben Fritz in The Wall Street Journal. Executives from the world's largest on-demand video service have been meeting with Hollywood studios and

production companies in recent months to hear content pitches and negotiate licenses for movies and TV shows. YouTube wants to give users more reasons to sign up for its new \$9.99-a-month subscription service, YouTube Red, which offers ad-free videos and streaming music. "YouTube is dominant in ad-supported online video, but they have missed the subscription side," said Mark Terbeek, a partner at venture capital firm Greycroft Partners. "To get people to pay, they will have to have higher-end content."

Stream your life on Facebook



Facebook thinks users are ready to go from posting photos of their child's birthday party to streaming it live, said Casey Newton on TheVerge.com. Four months after adding live video streaming for celebrities and other high-profile users, the social network is rolling out the feature to all of its app users. When updating their Facebook status, users will be able to select "live video" to stream whatever is happening around them. A notification will then be sent to an algorithmically generated list of "close friends", informing them that the user is broadcasting live. The move reflects Facebook's growing "embrace of video and its eagerness to capture more of the real-time content that drives so much global conversation".

Pick of the week's Gossip

Love Actually is the Marmite of festive films – even among the director's own family. **Richard Curtis** recently attended a midnight screening in New York of his 2003 romcom, along with his wife, broadcaster **Emma Freud** (pictured with Curtis), and their children. Live-tweeting throughout the screening, **Freud** revealed that the bit where **Alan Rickman**'s secretary tries to seduce him "still makes me want to puke". After prime minister **Hugh Grant**'s rant at the US president, their son asked scathingly: "Was that Dad's attempt at politics?" But at least **Curtis** enjoyed himself. "**Richard** laughing more than the rest of the audience put together," tweeted **Freud**. "Mind you – only four of them."



A hedge-fund manager dubbed "the most hated man in America" paid \$1.95m last week for the only copy of an album by the **Wu-Tang Clan**. But it appears he may not have read the small print. **Martin Shkreli** – a pharmaceuticals investor famous for raising the price of a drug used by HIV patients by more than 5,000% – bought the only copy of the hip-hop album *Once Upon a Time in Shaolin*, which will never be released to the public. It comes with a 174-page book of background information, and one unusual clause: "The seller may legally plan and attempt to execute one (1) heist or caper to steal back *Once Upon a Time in Shaolin*, which, if successful, would return all ownership rights to the seller." The clause adds that the theft may only be carried out by "currently active members of the Wu-Tang Clan and/or actor **Bill Murray**."

Saudi: Forging an Islamic military alliance

Projecting its ambition for regional leadership, Saudi Arabia said Tuesday it has lined up most of the Arab world, NATO member Turkey and several African and Asian countries behind an "Islamic military alliance" against terrorists, said Yahoo. "The move allows the Kingdom to cast itself as a leader in the fight against extremism." The announcement on state media said the Saudi-led alliance is being established because terrorism "should be fought by all means". The Kingdom's role in fighting terrorism has indeed been remarkable: Riyadh supports rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian despot Bashar al-Assad, and aptly so. "It is hard to find a sitting ruler with more blood on his hands than Syria's Bashar al-Assad," said *The Economist* of him. Saudi Arabia is also part of the US-led coalition seeking to annihilate the ISIL scourge in Iraq and Syria.



"Coordinating efforts"

pundits from the region have weighed in their praise for the initiative. Deputy Crown Prince and Defence Minister Mohammed bin Salman (pictured) said at a rare news conference that "the bloc will develop mechanisms for working with other countries" and international bodies to support counterterrorism efforts. Their efforts would not be limited to countering ISIL, he added. "Currently, every Muslim country is fighting terrorism individually... so coordinating efforts is very important," he said. Though few details were given, the statement said the alliance would not just be countering Sunni extremists but protecting Muslim nations from all terrorists "whatever their doctrine". When asked if this meant the alliance would also counter Shi'ite militants, the Saudi defence minister replied the coalition would fight terrorist groups "regardless of their categorisation", particularly in Syria and Iraq, where he said there will be cooperation with the international community.

On a final note, defence officials in Washington were at sixes and sevens following news of the announcement; The Saudi endeavour appeared to catch some [in Washington] "off-guard", said Aya Batrawy and Adam Schreck in *The Washington Post*. Meanwhile, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the alliance wouldn't be a substitute or a replacement for the US-led coalition fighting ISIL militants.

Venezuela: Spiralling into chaos?

After 17 years, Hugo Chávez's "Bolivarian Revolution" is totally exhausted, says *El País*. His regime's ruinous economic policies, continued by his successor Nicolas Maduro, have plunged Venezuela into poverty. Food shortages are chronic, corruption rampant. In parliamentary elections last week, erstwhile supporters defected en masse: with a thumping two-thirds majority, the opposition can now start rolling back Maduro's worst excesses. But not, alas, the currency and price controls that are stifling growth. Maduro, who blames his defeat on US plots and counter-revolutionary sabotage, won't budge on those. One just hopes that both sides can build bridges, starting with an amnesty for political prisoners.

More likely Maduro will prove as obstructive as Argentina's Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, whose "fanatical" calls for resistance to the incoming right-wing government have bordered on the ridiculous, says Danilo Arbilla in *El Espectador*. These charismatic left-wing leaders leave a terrible legacy, setting citizens at each other's throats and squandering taxes collected during the good times. Chávez's largesse was spectacular: he propped up Cuba's bankrupt government and lavished cash and cheap oil on like-minded regimes. That was fine when the price of oil, which accounts for some 95% of

Venezuela's exports, was above \$100 a barrel, says Juan Agulló and Rafel Rico Ríos in *Mediapart*. But at less than \$40, the regime can't afford such commitments. Nor can it rely on what has been a key political advantage: the long-term split between opposition moderates and radicals. This time the two managed to unite.

Hopes that Maduro might be more obliging after this defeat didn't last long, says José Miguel Vivanco on *H *rw.org*. He has already rejected a plea to release opposition leader Leopoldo López, recently jailed for 14 years in a farce of a trial (for allegedly calling for the regime's overthrow, even though its own experts could find no evidence of him doing so). And the current pro-Maduro National Assembly doesn't leave office until January, says Raúl Stolk in *The New York Times*. So it will be no surprise if Maduro, whose term runs until 2019, does as Chávez once did, and rushes through a decree allowing himself to rule by decree. Or he may try to pack the Supreme Tribunal of Justice, Venezuela's highest court, which has vast powers to check parliament. The fact that 13 of its justices have suddenly decided to retire early – thus allowing Maduro, rather than the new Assembly, to pick their successors – suggests he has already embarked on this plan. It's a risky strategy, given how unpopular his party is with the electorate.

Star Wars: JJ Abrams vs George Lucas

It's a good thing George Lucas was kept away from the new *Star Wars* film, said Andy Welch on NME.com. While Lucas created and directed the original three films, followed by two prequels, his strengths lie in being a great visionary. That said, "directionally, he is far less impressive... for these reasons his absence from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* can only be a good thing". Indeed, new director JJ Abrams "was a welcome surge of energy", said Justin Chang in *Variety*. "Reinvigorating the franchise with energy, warmth and excitement after the misbegotten cycle of prequels, the new director seems to have had the original three films in mind when he embarked on this monumental new undertaking."



"The review force is strong with this one"

"The review force is strong with this one," said Andrew Pulver in *The Guardian*. Yes, and deservedly so: *The Force Awakens* "re-awoke my love of the first movie and turned my inner fanboy into my outer fanboy", said Peter Bradshaw in the same newspaper. The film "is a movie in the spirit of the original trilogy that ended in 1983". Veteran co-writer Lawrence Kasdan and director JJ Abrams "have created a film which is both a narrative progression from the earlier three films, and a shrewdly affectionate next-gen reboot of the original 1977 *Star Wars*... what a Christmas present". The film has smashed all records for pre-release ticket sales, says Adam Sherwin in *The Independent*, not least because Disney (which in 2012 bought the sci-fi franchise from Lucasfilm for \$4bn) has spent vast amounts on marketing it. And in order to protect its investment it has also

embarked on the greatest anti-piracy campaign in cinema history. The film is being distributed on digitally encrypted files that can only be opened with a special electronic key. And Disney has refused to enter it for the traditional round of pre-Oscars film awards, because that would have involved circulating "screener" DVDs to voting members, thus exposing it to the threat of a possible leak.

There's nothing new about *Star Wars* mania, says Katie Glass in *The Sunday Times*. Over the years, \$20bn worth of *Star Wars* merchandise has been sold across the globe. But the mania surrounding the launch of the latest version of the franchise – *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* – has reached new heights. The movie, which reunites actors Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill from the original films, had fans queuing outside cinemas for days in anticipation. One couple even got married in a special ceremony outside an LA multiplex.

The real winner here is Disney, said *Wired.com*. The conglomerate bought Lucasfilm (and by extension *Star Wars*) in 2012 for \$4bn. Sure, "it's a large chunk of change", Shawn Robbins, a senior analyst at *BoxOffice.com*, told *Wired*. But "more than likely, Disney will make half that back on this [first] movie alone once you figure in all the revenue streams. Some analysts are already predicting Disney could reap \$500 million in revenue next year from *Star Wars* products alone".

ISS: First British astronaut in space

It begins with "300 tonnes of jet fuel exploding under you". You then spend months in a place where "there is neither air, nor water, nor life of any kind, and only Russian food". Trips to the International Space Station (ISS) are not for the faint-hearted, said *The Independent*. But Major Tim Peake, who made the journey this week, has the requisite "mixture of sangfroid and daring". The 43-year-old former test pilot isn't the first Briton to go into orbit. That honour belongs to Helen Sharman, a chemist from Sheffield who won a competition to briefly visit Russia's Mir space station in 1991 as part of a privately funded project. But Peake is the first 100% British professional astronaut to leave Earth. For the next six months, Major Tim will be "Britain's man up there".

Life on the ISS will take some getting used to, said Tom Whipple in *The Times*. There's no "up" or "down" on the space station, which is in constant freefall 250 miles above our planet, orbiting it at some 17,500mph. The \$100bn facility spans the same area as a football pitch and "has the equivalent living space of a

six-bedroom home, including two bathrooms, a gym and a bay window overlooking Earth". It takes about a month to master the art of moving around the ISS, Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield told *The Independent* on Sunday. At first, you misjudge your speed, and it's easy to break a finger. Peake and the crew will be kept busy. The mission schedule will divide their time into five-minute increments, detailing their every move from now until June.

"What, exactly, is the [ISS] for?" asked Anjana Ahuja in the FT. Over its past 15 years of continuous inhabitation, the facility has hosted interesting studies on the effects of microgravity. It's also a useful "organ of detente", encouraging cooperation between US and Russia and others. But perhaps the chief value of the ISS – which "may well qualify as the most expensive object ever built" – is as a tool of inspiration, encouraging further space exploration. The exploits of Peake and his fellow spacefarers remind us that "if we are fit and clever and brave enough, we too can slip the surly bonds of Earth and gaze back at this sapphire world".

Wit & Wisdom

"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city."

George Burns, quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*

"George, you can type this s***, but you can't say it!"

Harrison Ford, talking to George Lucas while making the first *Star Wars* movie, quoted in *The Times*

"The best way to find out things, if you come to think of it, is not to ask questions at all. If you fire off a question, it is like firing off a gun; bang it goes, and everything takes flight and runs for shelter. But if you sit quite still and pretend not to be looking, all the little facts will come and peck round your feet."

Elsbeth Huxley, quoted in *the Daily Mail*

"At the touch of love, everyone becomes a poet."

Plato, quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*

"Laws are spiderwebs, which catch the little flies, but cannot hold the big ones."

Philosopher Anacharsis of Scythia, quoted on *Reddit.com*

"Never commission anything to which you don't already know the answer."

Sir Humphrey, of TV's *Yes Minister*, quoted in *The Guardian*

"Every great advance in natural knowledge has involved the absolute rejection of authority."

T.H. Huxley, quoted on *Forbes.com*

"A great man is always willing to be little."

Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in *The Times*

Statistic of the week
US authorities have charged 71 people since March 2014 with having ties to ISIL. Of those charged, about half wanted to travel abroad to join ISIL's fighters in Syria and Iraq, and one quarter were plotting to carry out attacks in the US.

NPR.org

Football: Game over for Mourinho and van Gaal?

José Mourinho has “presided over one of the most shocking collapses” ever seen in English football, said Sam Wallace in *The Daily Telegraph*. On Monday night, his Chelsea side – last season’s dominant champions – lost 2-1 to Leicester, who last season barely avoided relegation. But far from accepting responsibility for the defeat, the manager insisted that his players had “betrayed” him. The joke doing the rounds this week was “all about Mourinho’s three-year plan”, said Oliver Kay in *The Times*. “Season one: buy the bus. Season two: park the bus. Season three: throw the players under the bus.” However, there’s no denying that in this loss, as in their eight previous Premier League defeats this season, the team looked “wretched”. Languishing at 16th, just one point above the relegation zone, the Blues are “unravelling”. All of their former strengths “look diminished” – Mourinho included. It can’t be long before he goes.



Mourinho: “Betrayed”

The mood at Manchester United isn’t much jollier, said Jonathan Liew in *The Daily Telegraph*. Since Alex Ferguson retired two years ago, the side has suffered all manner of humiliations – but last week’s double whammy took the biscuit. First the Red Devils were knocked out of the Champions League at the group stage, after losing 3-2 to Wolfsburg. Four days later, they were beaten 2-1 by Bournemouth, a newly promoted side assembled for just

\$3.76m. In both defeats, the Red Devils looked “bereft”: a team “without a basic idea”. The blame, surely, lies with Louis van Gaal, said Barney Ronay in *The Guardian*. The manager’s “constipated possession style” has starved the side of “verve and adventure”. There has been lavish spending on transfers – some \$376m in 18 months – yet none of van Gaal’s purchases has been an unqualified success, and more than a few are “simply unremarkable footballers”. The fact that many of his rejects are thriving elsewhere is another sign of his erratic judgement: former United striker Javier Hernández, having been sold to Bayer Leverkusen this summer, has scored 15 goals in his past 12 matches. Van Gaal could yet salvage the season: unlike Chelsea, now four places off the bottom, United are fourth in the league. But the fans aren’t holding out hope. In a poll last week, 59% said they wanted the manager fired. United’s owners aren’t too fussed, said Matthew Syed in *The Times*. The club is the second richest in the world, on track for a turnover of \$753m this year. And United executives have shrugged off the Champions League exit, pointing out that the Premier League is far more lucrative. Sooner or later, however, they will pay the price for their complacency. The club’s “insipid” football is “undermining” the brand they’re so keen to milk. “Something precious is being lost.”

Boxing: The “man mountain with a thunderous punch”

Boxing is “a vaudeville that thrives on heroes and villains”, said Oliver Holt in *The Mail on Sunday*. In recent weeks, following a series of controversial comments, Tyson Fury has been cast as the sport’s baddy. And now, Anthony Joshua has been “thrust into the role of the clean-up man”. Last Saturday night, the 26-year-old fighter took a huge step forward when he knocked out Dillian Whyte to win the British heavyweight title. It was the “biggest test” of Joshua’s career – and he passed it with ease, getting “stronger and stronger” as the fight went on, and finishing off his opponent in the seventh round.



Joshua: “Clean-up man”

Joshua has “the potential to become one of the most popular boxers in history”, said Ron Lewis in *The Times*. At just under two metres tall, he is a “man mountain with a thunderous punch and a warm smile”. And he appeals to fans partly because he is a “troublemaker turned good”. Growing up

in London, he was a promising footballer who once had a trial at Charlton Athletic, “but that career path ended when he attacked an opposition striker”. In 2011, Joshua’s boxing career almost went the same way when police found illegal substances in his car. Originally charged with intent to supply, he admitted a charge of drug possession and received a community sentence order. Yet barely a year later, he had won a gold medal at the Olympics. Joshua is “what boxing has been searching for since Lennox Lewis was in his prime”, said Paul Hayward in *The Daily Telegraph*. He isn’t world class – not yet, at least – and he needs more experience before he challenges Fury for the world title. But boxing fans can look forward to exciting times ahead, said Holt. For nine years, Wladimir Klitschko ruled the heavyweight division “by dictatorship”. His defeat by Fury last month “has sparked a free-for-all”. The heavyweight world is now “a land of opportunity”.

England vs. Wales: The tie of Euro 2016

Wales can breathe a sigh of relief, said Daniel Taylor in *The Observer*. Having qualified for their first major tournament since the 1958 World Cup, they wanted an easy draw for Euro 2016. And that’s exactly what they’ve got. Next June, in the group stage, they’ll come up against three underwhelming sides: Russia, Slovakia – and England. Both of the Home Nations will be favourites to progress to the next round, and it’s the encounter between them that ought to decide the group. The Welsh have a wretched record against England, said Jason Burt in *The Sunday Telegraph*. They’ve lost their previous four encounters, and haven’t beaten their rivals in four decades. But this time, they



Bale: “Outstanding”

will have one crucial advantage: in Gareth Bale, they boast the UK’s “outstanding” footballer. It was his goals and “zest for the game” that drove Wales through qualifying – and he will be the “biggest danger” for any of their opponents. Spare a thought for Ireland and Northern Ireland, said Paul Rowan in *The Sunday Times*. The draw was far crueller to them: Northern Ireland will face Germany, Ukraine and Poland; and, in perhaps the toughest group of all, the Republic must take on Belgium, the world’s top-ranked team, as well as Italy and Sweden. Ireland’s manager, Martin O’Neill, has a reputation for “making ordinary teams do wonderful things”. Come June, he will have to “find that recipe again”.

Sporting headlines

Golf Jamie Donaldson won the Thailand Golf Championship; Lee Westwood came second. The result earned both players a place at next year’s Masters and Open.

Rugby union As part of Eddie Jones’ overhaul of England, attack coach Mike Catt, defence coach Andy Farrell and forwards coach Graham Rowntree have all been released. In the European Rugby Champions Cup, Exeter beat Clermont Auvergne 31-14.

Football Newcastle beat Tottenham 2-1. Manchester City beat Swansea 2-1.

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Dirt Meridian

by Andrew Moore, *Damiani*, \$50

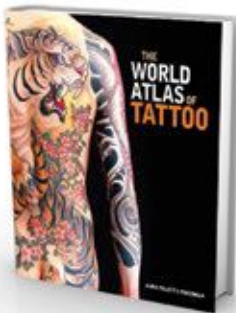


Andrew Moore's new photo collection gives us all "reason to look longingly" at a region often dismissed as flyover country, said Molly Roberts on Smithsonian.com. For the past decade, Moore has travelled regularly along the 100th meridian – a line that neatly divides the US – often using a

low-flying Cessna to capture sweeping views of the barren Great Plains below. "For the most part, this is spectacular open landscape," said Jonathan Bell on Wallpaper.com. But Moore also captures remnants of past lives, like abandoned farmhouses, and he's included portraits of scattered farmers and ranchers who, however deep their local roots go, are "still very much pioneers". This is an American heartland "strangely detached from the rest of the country".

The World Atlas of Tattoo

by Anna Felicity Friedman, *Yale*, \$35

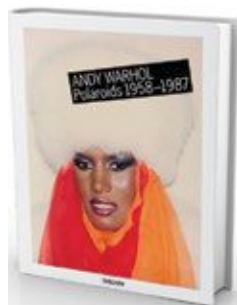


This "poetic, informative, and vibrant" book leaves no doubt that tattoos are an art form, said Priscilla Frank on HuffingtonPost.com. Scholar and blogger Anna Felicity Friedman "captures the extraordinary complexity" of body art, which predates ancient Egypt and has appeared in different forms on six continents. Friedman's atlas provides "a valuable corrective to many silly things we assume about tattooing",

said Josephine Livingstone in The New Republic. There is no clear line, for example, between the tattoos worn by American Millennials and the tattoos worn by distant peoples with long traditions in body art. Because tattoo is an art of the living, wherever it's practiced, it is also a "singularly postmodern" art form, forever appropriating, blending and making new signifiers that date back centuries.

Andy Warhol Polaroids

Taschen, \$100



When it comes to self-documentation, selfie-snapping millennials "pale in comparison with Andy Warhol", said Stephanie Eckardt on NYMag.com. For nearly three decades, the legendary pop artist used a Polaroid camera daily, collecting instant photos of himself and his many famous friends. "Between 1958 and 1987, Warhol caught Liza Minnelli and Anjelica Huston in their prime; Audrey Hepburn in her 40s, and John Kennedy Jr., Tatum O'Neal and Jade

Jagger as toddlers." Yes, "the star power in the book is staggering", said Margaret Rhodes on Wired.com. "But Warhol's brilliant use of Polaroids is just as fascinating." He embraced the images' "low-rent realism", as well as the instant serial effects he could create. "People take photos now the way Warhol did then – constantly."

The Rap Year Book

by Shea Serrano, *Abrams*, \$19



The Rap Year Book feels like "the reading equivalent of a Ken Burns documentary, except with more cuss words", said Jill Krasny on Esquire.com. Starting with 1979, music writer Shea Serrano has looked back on rap's history and made a case for the one track each year that did the most to advance the genre. "Bright, colourful" cartoons and cheeky infographics – including a bar graph charting the use of obscenities on

the NWA album *Straight Outta Compton* – make the book "shamelessly" fun, said Colin Fitzgerald on PopMatters.com. Serrano even ropes in essays by writers who contest his choices. Along the way, he persuasively explains how we progressed from Kurtis Blow's "The Breaks" to Kanye West's "Monster", and his deadpan humour makes that tour "the perfect combination of accessible and informative".

Ingredients

by Steve Ettlinger and Dwight Eschliman, *Regan Arts*, \$35



Ingredients belongs in the library of "everyone who cares about what goes into our food", said Cree LeFavour on NYTimes.com. Granted, "this is a very geeky project". But photographer Dwight Eschliman and science writer Steve Ettlinger have found a compelling way to demystify the long lists of ingredients on the packaging of Doritos, Pepsi and other processed foods. Each product is broken into its component parts, which

are then lined up and photographed. Alongside each "strangely beautiful" image, said Michael Mechanic in Mother Jones, Ettlinger explains why, for example, a McNugget requires monocalcium phosphate and dimethylpolysiloxane. As he reminds us, people have been adding tints and preservatives to food for centuries, and most of those additives are both benign and necessary.

Thing Explainer

by Randall Munroe, *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*, \$25



Randall Munroe's brilliant new picture book is "a feast for the eyes and a party for your brain", said Katie McKissick on ScientificAmerican.com. The creator of the web comic XKCD has taken a stance against technical jargon by illustrating and explaining a huge variety of complicated objects and ideas using only the 1,000 most commonly used words in the English language. "Part of the delight of this is enjoying the linguistic backflips he has to go

through," said Cory Doctorow on BoingBoing.com. The wi-fi chip in your smartphone is renamed a "hot spot talker", for example, and the *Saturn V* rocket becomes the "Up-Goer Five". When Munroe nails the challenge he's created for himself, he "turns the abstract and abstruse into something you can share with a child".



Best books... Robin Coste Lewis

Robin Coste Lewis' debut poetry collection, *Voyage of the Sable Venus*, won a 2015 US National Book Award. The title poem is 79 pages long and is entirely composed of a savvy listing of Western artworks that have depicted the black female figure.

Jazz by Toni Morrison (Vintage, \$16). It would be enough that *Jazz* brilliantly explores a significant moment from the past through the story of a love triangle in Harlem, and that Morrison layers various histories so that each steps up then recedes – yes! – like jazz improvisation. But on top of all that, she draws and redraws the frame of narration, ever so subtly, so that one begins to wonder about the narrator's identity.

Notebook of a Return to the Native

Land by Aimé Césaire (Wesleyan, \$18). This long poem, which shook the French literary world in 1939, examines the ways home is ruptured – or even prevented from existing –

by colonialism. And what, the book asks, does that mean? How can one return to a home that was never built?

Handwriting by Michael Ondaatje (Vintage, \$14). This is the first contemporary poetry collection I read that showed me how to hold the ancient world, issues of empire, and post-coloniality all in the same hand. There's something documentarian about these poems, but the documentation is lyrical; it sings.

Philosophical Investigations by Ludwig Wittgenstein (Wiley-Blackwell, \$39).

Wittgenstein's slow descent into the trickery of language haunts me. His meditations on

the games we play with one another, indeed the ways we construct ourselves, via sounds and signs, took over my head.

The Mahabharata (Penguin, \$20). Like most epics, there is a war (boo!) and there are men behaving, predictably, badly (double boo!). Yet embroidered throughout this Sanskrit epic's grand arc are countless scenes where the floor shifts, the frame slips. Gods grow tenderly existential; lovers meet and then, lifetimes later, return as enemies in war, unaware of their intimate history. It is all about shape-shifting, which is to say the *Mahabharata* is a guide to living that's only pretending to be a tale of war.

Don't miss...

GIG OF THE WEEK:

Surfaces & Solids by Nazgol Ansarinia

Until 9 January, 2016, Green Art Gallery, Al Quoz Industrial Area 1, Dubai, UAE



In the years since the revolution, Iran's reconstruction has been twofold. The post-1979 economic recovery has resulted in a flurry of new buildings, along with a tidal wave of gentrification and widening income disparity. It is joined by a sustained invocation of nostalgia – for the Iranian pastoral, for ancient Persian civilisations – that looks to construct a scaffolding of renewed national identity and pride. In *Surfaces & Solids*, Nazgol Ansarinia considers these recent decades, and how these dual efforts have manifested themselves in Tehran's urban and

socio-economic fabrics. For instance, in the work entitled "Membranes", Ansarinia plays with the traces left behind on a neighbouring wall after a house has been demolished and its inhabitants have gone. Ghosted outlines of picture frames and sofa backs hint at the original function of the space. This is a Persia that is fleeting; catch it before it vanishes.

New albums

Chris Brown

Royalty (RCA)

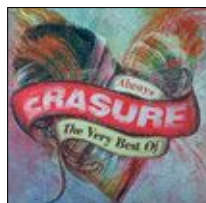


After celebrating 10 highly successful years in the music business, Chris Brown continues to amp up the release of his seventh studio album, *Royalty*. For

this release, "he's taking the hype tracks down a notch", balancing smooth rhythms with "a scattering of bouncing club bangers", putting a huge focus on his stellar vocals, said RenownedForSound.com.

Erasure

Always, The Very Best of Erasure (Mute)



This is the most purely distilled collection of chart-conquering synth-pop ever produced, said The Guardian. And even though the sparkling originals outshine

them [the remixes], "that's more a testament to the longevity of this often critically overlooked duo". Disco divas can look forward to Erasure's camper-than-Abba cover of "Take a Chance On Me".

Best of rest

Cinderella the Pantomime

24 December, 8pm, Centrepont Theatre, DUCTAC, Dubai, UAE

Everyone's favourite fairy tale told in classic British pantomime style during the festive season! What more could a family ask for? Babyshop presents *Cinderella*, a classic tale of love, happily ever after, pumpkins and ugly sisters. Follow the adventure of Cinderella, the daughter of Baron Hardup, as she dreams of a better life away from her two ugly sisters Ophelia and Fannie. Sumptuous sets, colourful costumes, musical magic, comedy capers and a glass slipper full of audience participation, this show is the ideal festive treat for all the family... Book now before you turn into a pumpkin!

Dearest

22 December, 8pm, The Scene Film Club, Knowledge Village, Dubai, UAE

Dearest is a 2014 Chinese-language film directed by Peter Ho-Sun Chan on kidnapping in China. Based on a true story, it's centred around a couple living in a remote village and dealing with the disappearance of their missing son. The film was showcased at the Toronto International Film Festival and is the winner of numerous awards. "While *Dearest* does possess elements of Hollywood movies, it is grounded in truth. Human trafficking is a huge problem in China, where boys are seen as a valuable trading commodity," said The South China Morning Post. For registration and membership details, log on to thescenecub.com

The Big Short

Dir: Adam McKay
2hrs 10mins (PG13)

Wall Street upstarts bet heavily on a market crash

★★★

The Big Short is part black comedy, part Wall Street thriller, and “a window like no other” on the fraud at the heart of today’s American economy, said David Edelstein in New York. “A brilliant, nasty paradox” adds bite to the drama, which is based on a nonfiction bestseller by Michael Lewis: When we start rooting for four investment-industry mavericks who spot the rot in the pre-2008 housing market and bet on the market’s implosion, “we’re actually rooting for global economic collapse and the loss of our own money”. Unfortunately, too much of the movie “plays like a trying lecture”, said Nigel M. Smith in The Guardian. Though Christian Bale, Ryan Gosling, Steve Carell and Brad Pitt deliver “showy” performances as the story’s misfit heroes, director Adam McKay (*Anchorman* and *Talladega Nights*) expends too much energy just trying – albeit cleverly – to help viewers decipher all the financial jargon. Still, “I’m willing to forgive everything shabby in *The Big Short*: the style, the hectoring, and even the wigs,” said Stuart Klawans in The Nation. “*The Big Short* has the messy vitality that comes only when filmmakers are convinced they really need to tell you something and are determined to entertain you so they’ll be sure you’re listening.”



In the Heart of the Sea

Dir: Ron Howard
2hrs 2mins (PG13)

The story that inspired Moby-Dick

★★

Though “wayward and unwieldy”, Ron Howard’s latest feature is “so unfashionable that it’s almost gallant”, said Stephanie Zacharek in Time. Like a studio release from many decades ago, it’s a straightforward adventure film, one based in this case on an 1820 disaster at sea that inspired Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*. That detail becomes a framing device here, as we watch a young Melville, played by Ben Wishaw, interview a grizzled ex-sailor about his experiences on the crew of a whaling ship wrecked 30 years earlier by an angry leviathan. On the doomed ship, Chris Hemsworth plays a seasoned first mate who clashes with his inexperienced captain (Benjamin Walker), and the whales they encounter “seem real, and deadly”, said Alonso Duralde in TheWrap.com. Though the characters are all forgettable, lovers of spectacle “will come away from the movie with many discrete sequences to admire”. Even the “unflinchingly brutal” whale kills, however, “have a slick CGI patina that lessens their visceral impact”, said Chris Nashawaty in Entertainment Weekly. Survivors of the shipwreck will end up stranded at sea for months, but the movie proves “too polite to give us a real feeling of life or death. Its sense of danger is watered down”.



Sisters

Dir: Jason Moore
1hr 58mins (15+)

Filthily funny comedy

★★★★

In this movie, *Saturday Night Live* comedians Tina Fey and Amy Poehler play two contrasting thirty-something sisters, one wild, the other responsible. Outraged on learning that their parents (James Brolin and Dianne Wiest) are selling the family home and that they’ve only two days to clear out their rooms, they respond, like naughty teenagers, by throwing a massive party. The result is “raucous, female-centred fun”, said Kevin Maher in The Times. It also boasts a hilarious turn from John Leguizamo as a local sleaze, who defends his creepy come-ons with the wonderful catchphrase, “I’m just putting it out there”. Be warned, said Allan Hunter in the Daily Express: some of the jokes in *Sisters* are pretty vulgar. Fortunately, Fey and Poehler have the style and “sheer brass neck” to make this work. *Sisters* isn’t exactly original, said Peter Bradshaw in The Guardian. It’s what some critics airily refer to as an “audience service” movie. In short, it’s a “cracking crowd-pleaser”.



New on DVD and Blu-ray

Blind

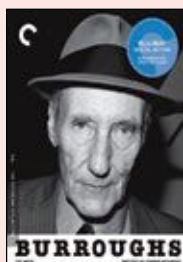
(KimStim, \$30)



This recent Norwegian import is “a haunting puzzle of a movie, one to pick at, to unpeel, to see a second time”, said The Village Voice. When a young Oslo woman goes blind, she begins writing erotic stories about lonely people, though what’s fact and what’s fantasy become surreally twisted.

Burroughs: The Movie

(Criterion, \$40)



This 1983 documentary “gets as intimate as one might want” with William Burroughs, the multiple-addicted Beat author “who wrote some of the most nightmarish prose in American literature”, said The Boston Globe. Highlights include Burroughs’ chats with Allen Ginsberg and Patti Smith.

Ant-Man

(Disney, \$30)



Marvel’s first superhero comedy was “infectious, silly entertainment” and wound up being one of summer’s big hits, said The Austin Chronicle. Paul Rudd brought plenty of “disarming charm” to the lead role, playing a man asked to don a suit that makes him small enough to lead an army of ants.

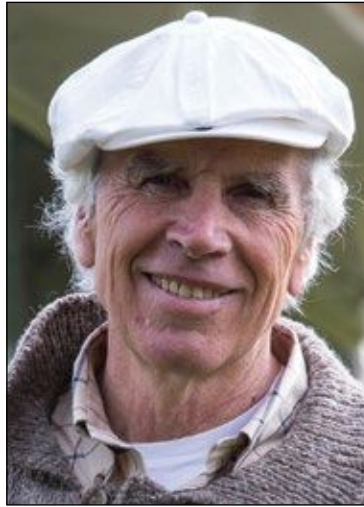
Retail entrepreneur with a passion for conservation

Douglas Tompkins
1943-2015

Douglas Tompkins, who has died aged 72, made millions as the co-founder of two hugely successful retail chains – The North Face and Esprit – before selling up in 1990 and beginning a new life as a conservationist. Over the next two decades, he used his fortune to acquire vast tracts of land in Chile and Argentina, and created the world's largest network of privately owned nature reserves. "Never stop exploring" was his first business's slogan, said *The Sunday Times*, and it could have been his own too.

Douglas Tompkins was born in Ohio in 1943, and brought up in New York State, the son of a wealthy antiques dealer. He began climbing aged 12, and learned to ski on holidays in Wyoming. At 17, he was expelled from his boarding school (he was, he said, never "great on heeding authority") and moved to California to live as "a kind of ski bum" in the mountains, said *The Washington Post*. Hitchhiking one day near Lake Tahoe, he was picked up by a 20-year-old casino worker called Susie Russell who shared his passion for the outdoors. They married in 1964, moved to San Francisco and opened a shop selling high-end adventure gear imported from Europe. They called it The North Face and invited the Grateful Dead to play at the shop's launch party. "There wasn't anything we were afraid of, there wasn't anything we couldn't figure out how to do," she later recalled. "It was just an open book of adventure."

Within a couple of years, however, they had grown bored of running a shop, so they sold North Face for \$50,000. He then concentrated on making documentaries about mountaineering while she launched a new business with a friend, selling colourful mini-dresses – inspired by the free-spirited fashions being worn in Europe – out of the back of a VW van. Tompkins subsequently



Tompkins: Died while kayaking

came on board to manage the business, which was called the Plain Jane Dress Company until 1971, when it was relaunched as Esprit de Corps; it later became just Esprit. Although he had no great interest in fashion, he could spot a trend – and by the late 1980s, Esprit was turning over \$1bn a year. But by then Tompkins was growing weary of an industry he considered "intellectually vacuous"; his marriage was in trouble; and he was also growing increasingly passionate about environmental causes. Esprit had been early to adopt ethical policies, but in the end Tompkins concluded that if it was serious about saving the planet, he'd have to stop "selling people countless things they don't need". He and Susie divorced; he sold his share in Esprit for \$150m; and in 1990, moved to Patagonia, to run his own conservation charity.

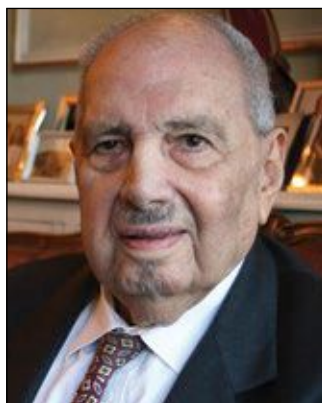
In total, Tompkins and his second wife, Kris – the former CEO of the Patagonia clothing company – bought more than two million acres of land, which they either gave to existing national parks, or set aside for conservation privately. Their attempts to preserve pristine ecosystems did not always endear them to local people, who would have preferred the land to be economically productive; Chilean politicians accused them of conspiring in a "land grab". But Tompkins was neither surprised nor deterred by local opposition. "Land use is highly political here, more than most places," he told *The Guardian* in 2009. "If we wanted to retire in peace, we wouldn't be here." In any case, he was convinced that given time, people would come around to his way of thinking. He was fond of quoting Lincoln: "Laws change; people die; the land remains." Tompkins was kayaking around a glacial lake on the Argentine border last week when his boat overturned in 2.5-metre swell; thrown into freezing waters, he developed severe hypothermia and though airlifted to hospital, died hours later.

Iraqi exile who became devoted to his adopted country

Sir Naim Dangoor
1914-2015

Naim Dangoor was an Iraqi-Jewish businessman who fled to Britain in the 1960s after the Ba'ath Party seized power. Settling in London, he vowed that if he made another fortune in the "wonderful country" that had taken him as a refugee, he would plough his gains back into philanthropic causes – and he was as good as his word, said *The Times*. His Exilarch's Foundation gave millions to organisations ranging from The Francis Crick Institute to Cancer Research UK.

One of six children, Naim Dangoor was born in Baghdad in 1914, when Iraq was still Ottoman ruled. His grandfather had been the city's chief rabbi, while his father was a hugely successful printer known as the "King of Paper". Naim studied engineering in London – just travelling there took him five days – then returned to Iraq, where he went into business with his great friend, a Muslim named Ahmed Safwat. They began supplying windows to Iraqi government buildings, then won the first contract to bottle Coca-Cola in Iraq. But with the rise of Arab nationalism and anti-Israeli sentiment, life became increasingly difficult for Jews in the region. By the early 1950s, many of Iraq's Jews had left; the rise of the Ba'ath Party made matters worse, and in 1959, Dangoor moved his family to Britain. He continued to travel back and forth himself, however, until 1964, when he



Dangoor: Successful businessman

was warned that as a "denationalised Jew" he must either come back for good, or forfeit his empire. Deciding he'd be risking more than money if he went home, he claimed asylum in the UK.

Dangoor had lost just about everything but not long afterwards, a friend in London helped him secure a loan, which he used to buy his first commercial property. His company, Monopro, would end up being worth some \$128m. Meanwhile, anxious to preserve his cultural heritage, he founded a social club for Iraqi Jews in Britain, and in 1970, appointed himself Exilarch – the name given to the supreme leaders of the diaspora in Babylon in the centuries after the first fall of Jerusalem. Passionate about

extending educational opportunities, and determined to give something back to his adopted country, Dangoor funded 1,000 scholarships for students with no family history of tertiary education; and gave \$6m to encourage thousands more low-income students to study STEM subjects. He also sponsored the new Westminster Academy, and in 2014, made the largest gift to the Royal Society of Medicine in its history, to support young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who aspire to careers in medicine. He was made an OBE in 2006, a CBE in 2012, and in June, became the second oldest person ever to be knighted, aged 101.

UAE: Beautiful apartments in Dubai



▲ **Dubai:** This modern 5-bedroom penthouse with panoramic views of the Palm Jumeirah and the city skyline is located in the Emirates Crown Tower in Dubai Marina. With high-end finishes throughout, the residence features a double reception and dining area, cellar, kitchen and cinema room. There are parquet floors, bespoke furniture, plush lounges and mood lightings. The master bedroom features a dressing room with separate his and hers shower rooms and a children's bedroom is furnished with a twin bed, cabinets, dressers and attractive wall art. Price on application, Knight Frank (+971 4) 426 77610.



International: An Art Deco mansion and Maltese villa



▲ **Belgium:** Designed by the renowned architect Victor Horta in 1913, the mansion has been recently tastefully renovated with an artistic Art Deco flair. Surrounded by 3-hectare parkland with views over the Genval lake the property comprises a bastide measuring 1,000sq.m and a 250sq.m. caretaker dwelling. The property offers several bedrooms, large sitting rooms with fireplaces, separate dining rooms, fitness room with sauna, staircase with fresco painted walls, wooden floors, cellar and paved courtyard and garden grounds. \$4.9m; Emile Garcin Bruxelles (+32 02) 201 9400

▼ **Malta:** Located in the prime residential town of Mdina, the villa enjoys lovely sea and countryside views. The 4-bedroom residence comprises a large entrance hall with a grand staircase leading to the bedrooms with terraces overlooking the pool area. Interiors feature chandeliers, paintings, fireplaces, wood panelling and marble floors. \$11.6m; Chestertons International (+44 20) 7201 2071.





▼ **Dubai:** This duplex apartment with a grand main living room is located in the Shams Tower in Jumeirah Beach Residence. The lower level consists of an open living area, a fully-equipped modern kitchen, dining for eight and a guest bedroom. On the top level accessed by a spiral staircase are 3 bedrooms, large walk-in wardrobes, family area and a study. A mix of quality marble, wooden floors, large glass windows and quality furnishings complete the residence to exacting standards. Owners also enjoy several facilities including private elevators, reception service, community pool and gym and 2 allocated parking. \$1.6m; Luxhabitat (+971 4) 550 8335.



UK: Houses that inspired Blur and Enid Blyton



◀ **Bedfordshire:** The Bury, Barton-le-Clay. The only home in England to have had a No. 1 song written about it, this Grade II property in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was the inspiration for Blur's hit single "Country House". Master bed with dressing room, guest suite, 4 further beds, 2 further baths, WC, breakfast/kitchen, 4 receps, hall, utility, cloakroom, 2 cellars, study, 1-bed barn annexe, office, garage, outbuildings, idyllic gardens and grounds, 4 acres. \$2.6m; Savills (+441 582) 465 000.

► **Bucks:** Old Thatch, Bourne End. A 17th-century, Grade II house in fine secluded gardens, once home to Enid Blyton and where the author did much of her writing. Ground floor suite, 3 further beds, family bath, kitchen/family room, 3 receps, cloakroom, mezzanine study, galleried landing, attic storage, landscaped gardens. \$2.6m; Knight Frank (+441 494) 675 368.



LEISURE

Food & Drink

Chocolate chestnut cake: A wheat-free treat

Not a lot of holiday chocolate cakes could be considered light, but “this one is”, said David Tanis in *The New York Times*. Adapted from a recipe by baker Alice Medrich, it’s wheat-free and uses chestnut flour, which gives the cake “a subtle nutty, earthy aura”. You can find chestnut flour online or at natural food stores.

Recipe of the week

- 4 oz chocolate (64% cacao or less)
- 4 oz unsalted butter
- 4 large eggs, separated
- ½ cup plus 2 tbsp sugar
- ⅛ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- ½ cup chestnut flour
- ½ cup chopped cooked chestnuts (canned or vacuum-packed)
- 1 cup heavy cream
- chocolate curls or cocoa powder

Heat oven to 375°F. In a bowl set over boiling water, warm chocolate and butter until chocolate melts almost completely.



Remove from heat. Whisk until smooth. In a mixing bowl, whisk egg yolks, ¼ cup sugar and salt until thick. Stir in warm chocolate mixture. Set aside.

In another bowl, beat egg whites with cream of tartar until fluffy, then add ¼ cup sugar. Beat until whites are stiff but not dry. Stir chestnut flour and chopped chestnuts into chocolate batter, then fold in ¼ of the egg whites to lighten mixture.

Fold in remaining whites and scrape batter into an unbuttered 8-inch springform pan. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out almost clean. Cool on a rack.

Run a knife around cake edge to free sides. Transfer to a serving plate. Whip cream with 2 tbsp sugar. Spoon over cake and spread with a spatula. Sprinkle with chocolate curls or cocoa powder.

Eusebi Deli

152 Park Road, Glasgow, UK
(+141) 648 9999

Eusebi Deli, the pride of Shettleston in the east of Glasgow, has (after many years trying) found a site in the posher West End. And if the queues outside this former car showroom off Gibson Street are anything to go by, says Marina O’Loughlin in *The Guardian*, the “locals have undergone something of a *colpo di fulmine*. We’re talking instant love”. I can see why. The counters groan with homemade cakes and pastries, and enough meats and pink, jolly dishes to “warm the cockles of any Italophile”. The “pinsas pizzas” are beautifully light – “pillowy, air-bubbled dough with great chew and a nicely charred base”. A dish described as “yesterday’s lasagne” is an “absolute, ribsticking classic”. And they even have a “stealth burger” in the form of bolognese ragu in a brioche bun. There is now talk of three more outlets in the city, “and anyone lucky enough to score one of them as a neighbour should start celebrating”.



The Maine Oyster Bar & Grill

Double Tree By Hilton Hotel, JBR, Dubai, UAE, themaine.ae

This new addition to JBR in Dubai “is one of the most ambitious projects in the area – and it’s already making Dubai’s diners sit up and take notice”, said What’s On. Founder Joey Ghazal has created the effect of “plucking a fisherman’s warehouse from the shores of America’s East Coast, and transformed it into a cool seaside brasserie”. The halibut and béarnaise main course “was the stuff of dreams: lightly sautéed with a rich creamy buttery sauce”. The truffle and mushroom pizza “was an unexpected curveball – and an instant home run”. In terms of “design, vibe and food, The Maine is a hidden pearl” in JBR.

cake was “heavenly and melted in your mouth”. The “huge, reasonably priced portions” made the trip a success.

Mama Fu’s Asian House

Level one, Dalma Mall,
Mussafah, Abu Dhabi, UAE.
(+ 971 4) 25504972

There are not many restaurants in Abu Dhabi that have multiple Asian cuisines under one roof, said *Gulf News*. But that’s exactly what Mama Fu’s Asian House is offering. Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and Korean are all on the menu at the new joint in Dalma Mall in the capital. Mama Fu’s has a “buzzing atmosphere and vibrant cool interiors”. The restaurant’s USP is that every dish on the menu can be personalised – by “choosing chicken, beef or shrimp as your preferred protein”. The orders “took less than seven minutes to arrive” and the Sesame Chicken Salad was “attention grabbing” with “thin pieces of crunchy sesame-coated chicken with a sharp and sweet flavour”. The Dynamite Shrimp, however, “didn’t go down well – the batter was very chewy and oily”. The Crab Rangoon is one of their most popular dishes, but “less mayonnaise would have retained the freshness of the finely shredded crabmeat filling”. For dessert, the gooey moist chocolate

This week's dream: Trekking in the mountains of Peru

Peru's fourth-highest mountain, Apu Ausangate, is sacred to Andean people, who hold it to be the "father protector" of the Cusco Valley – the ancient heart of the vast Inca Empire. Rising to 6,384 metres, it is remote and utterly spectacular – but thanks to the sustainable tourism company Andean Lodges, you can now hike around its flank in considerable comfort, says James Henderson in the FT. Guests stay in four lodges recently built in cooperation with two nearby villages, Chillca and Osefina, and can enjoy fresh food, artisanal chocolates and hot showers despite the lack of electricity. The company ploughs its profits back into the local communities, which also provide guides, chefs and housekeepers, as well as horses and llamas to ferry visitors' luggage on various routes. The one ineradicable source of discomfort is, of course, the altitude. Some of the route is higher than the summit of Mont Blanc, and even an "extended



Lama selfie: The foothills of Apu Ausangate

conversation" at such elevations can leave you "puffed". So the first three or four days are spent acclimatising in the city of Cusco, which has an "alluring, atmospheric" Spanish colonial centre, and impressive Inca remains. From there, it's a four-hour drive past ever smaller Andean villages to Chillca, at 4,300 metres, where the walk starts.

You climb first through meadows, and then up into a "vast rocky valley" where the silence is rent by the "clatter" of rockslides and the cracking of glaciers. On the third day, you pass a lake where Andean shamans "complete their spiritual initiation"; and higher still, enter a

"moonscape" where the mountain's sides are striped like a "camel blanket" with mineral colours – vermilion, green, yellow, "peppermint-grey". It is a place of such unearthly beauty and solitude, even the least religious of hikers might have a sense of the divine. *Aracari Travel* (aracari.com) organises packages.

Hotel of the week

The House Hotel Cappadocia, Turkey

With its bizarre rock formations (the so-called "fairy chimneys") and ancient troglodyte cities, Cappadocia is Turkey's most "weird and wonderful" region – and this atmospheric new opening, by Istanbul's "trendsetting" House Hotel group, sits at its heart, says Tatler. The hotel, in Ortahisar, occupies former monastic cave-dwellings and old houses carved entirely of rugged, worn old stone. But its suites are sumptuously furnished, and its bathrooms done out in "sleek" marble. There's a "divine" hammam and underground spa, a "sun-soaked" breakfast terrace, and a fire pit for *pide* (Turkish pizza).

Doubles from \$120 b&b
(+90 384 343 24 25,
thehousehotel.com)



Getting the flavour of...

An Australian Eden

Like "a luminous painting of the world before the Fall", quivering with colourful life, Arnhem Land is one of Australia's most magnificent wild places, says Sean Thomas in *The Times*. Occupying much of the Top End (the northernmost part of the Northern Territory), it is as big as Portugal, but there's only one place to stay near its heart – the "simple but gracious" Davidson's Arnhemland Safari Lodge. Exploring the surrounding "wetlands, billabongs, escarpments and labyrinthine rock ledges", on foot and by boat, you'll see huge monitor lizards, lazing crocodiles and innumerable "delicate birds". And there's much vivid rock art too – "dancing yellow butterflies, great white fishes, spear-wielding hunters" – representing "50,000 years of one single, continuous, unbroken artistic culture". *Davidson's Arnhemland Safaris* (arnhemland-safaris.com) has cabins from \$550pn including meals, tours and activities.



Art in the Inner Hebrides

Located 10 miles off the west coast of Scotland in the "turbulent" Minch strait, the Isle of Eigg is rich in natural beauty, with a "towering" lava ridge, a breeding population of eagles, and a "singing beach" of quartz sand. It is also among the most hip and happening of the smaller Hebrides, says Sophie Campbell in *Condé Nast Traveller*. Having pulled off a "pioneering" buyout of the 11.8-square-mile island in 1997, its residents set up the world's first stand-alone energy grid, powered by wind, waves and sun, Eigg Electric. The island even has its own music label, Lost Map Records, and an occasional exhibition space, Sweeney's Bothy. Culturally-inclined visitors should also look up Eigg Box, a "creative collective" of artists and writers who put on events, sometimes on the beach. *Eigg Time* (eiggtime.com) has holiday lets from \$100pn.



Companies in the news ...and how they were assessed

Emirates: Expanding those Chinese wings

The UAE and China have launched a joint strategic investment fund worth \$10bn, the two countries said in a joint statement on UAE state news agency WAM. And it seems that the partnership is indeed soaring. Emirates will start flying to two new cities in China as the Dubai carrier taps rising demand for travel in the world's most populous country, said The National. From May 2016, Emirates will start four weekly flights to Yinchuan and Zhengzhou. The airline already flies to Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou in mainland China. Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia, is situated to the west of the Yellow River and to the east of Helan Mountain. The city, known for its large Muslim base, serves as a connecting point for trade and cultural exchange between China and the Middle East. Meanwhile, Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan Province, is an educational, technological and economic hub in China. Emirates will operate a Boeing 777-200LR aircraft to both destinations. The aircraft has a three class configuration – offering 266 seats and 14 tonnes of cargo capacity in the hold. “As China's regions continue to open up to the global economy, Emirates remains keen to support this with the further expansion of air services in mainland China,” said Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the airline group's chairman and chief executive.

Reckitt Benckiser: Dose of reality

The Advertising Standards Authority is investigating Reckitt Benckiser, the British company that makes Nurofen, over complaints that it “misled consumers with claims about the painkilling effects of the drug”, said Robert Cookson in the FT. The UK probe follows an Australian court ruling that Reckitt deceived customers by marketing products for specific pains – such as back pain, migraine or period pain – as if they were specially formulated. In fact, they were “identical”: all contained 342mg of the same active ingredient, ibuprofen lysine. Yet many of these products were sold for “almost double the price” of Nurofen's standard product. “When you're in pain, you'll spend anything to get out of it,” said Jim Armitage in the London Evening Standard – and Reckitt has exploited that. In the UK, to date, we've given these products the all-clear: the medicines regulator allows manufacturers to give medicines “informative names” to help patients select an appropriate product. That seems like a generous interpretation of a fairly cynical marketing ploy. Time for a rethink.

Mining: Dramatic job cuts at Anglo American

“The worst slump in commodity markets for a decade has engulfed the mining sector”, said James Wilson and Neil Hume in the Financial Times, as mining giant Anglo American announced it will slash 85,000 jobs – an incredible two-thirds of its global workforce. The decision is part of a “radical restructuring” that will see Anglo American close more than half of its 55 mines and smelters and cancel dividend payments to investors for the next 18 months. The dramatic retreat underscores the immense challenges mining and energy companies face from the economic slowdown in China and the global glut of “everything from copper and platinum to coal and diamonds.” Many commodities firms, which invested heavily in a growing China in recent years, have declared bankruptcy or are now falling behind on their debt.



Gulf business

Yahoo! Middle East has announced plans to close its **Dubai office** next year putting up to **50 jobs** at risk. The US internet giant will close its **Internet City-based office** by **April 2016** in an attempt to ‘streamline’ its multinational operations. **Yahoo!** opened the office in **2009** when it acquired **Maktoob.com** for **\$164m**, which was then the region's **biggest social network** with **19 million users** (see Commentators, page 37).

Dubai-based ports operator **DP World** is investing around **\$1.9bn in China**. DP World said that it inked a **\$636m deal** to build a smart container terminal in the port of **Qingdao**, first of its kind in China. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2017. The company also signed **another deal worth \$1.2bn** to build a second port in **Tianjin City**.

Ratings agency **Fitch** issued a **negative 2016 outlook** for **banks in the GCC** countries, anticipating the toll **low oil prices** could have on these lenders. About **16%** of all ratings assigned to the **GCC banks** were negative, the report said. **Saudi Arabia's banks** could be hit the hardest as it has the most banks with **negative ratings**.

The share of transactions completed on **mobile phone** in the **Middle East** has surpassed the world average, a report by **Criteo** has found. **The State of Mobile Commerce** report found that mobile phones made up **38.8%** of digital purchases in the **Middle East region**, while the global average remains at **35%**. Mobile sales in **Saudi Arabia** and the **UAE** amounted to **79%** of the market, while tablets trailed at **21%** of sales. Nearly half of tablet users employed another device to complete a transaction, while **43%** of smartphone users did so likewise.

Rolls-Royce: Pondering a nuclear option

Uncertainty at Rolls-Royce, which has suffered five profit warnings in two years, has set alarm bells ringing in Downing Street, said Peggy Hollinger in the Financial Times. As shares continue to head downhill, there is growing “nervousness” that Britain's flagship engineer could face a foreign bid before the new boss, Warren East, can right the ship. That would have big implications for defence, because Rolls makes the powerplants for the Trident nuclear submarine fleet.

According to a leaked report from the UK PM's office, various scenarios have been drawn up “in case of serious bother”, said Andrew Saunders in Management Today. They include an option to nationalise the \$752m-a-year nuclear sub business, or possibly merge all or part of the company with Britain's other large defence contractor, BAE Systems. For once the Downing Street response looks right, said Alex Brummer



“Nationalisation is a bad idea”

in the Daily Mail. This is “critical stuff”. Even if a foreign bidder isn't forthcoming, the arrival of activist investor ValueAct on the Rolls-Royce share register, with a 10% stake, “rightly” has No. 10 “on edge”. Although “nationalisation is a bad idea”, a deal that would ring-fence Rolls' nuclear work, and put it in a joint venture with BAE Systems, might be the best option.

Yet as City analysts have pointed out, the Government already has a “golden share” in strategically important Rolls, said Alan Tovey in The Daily Telegraph. This means that any investor is prevented from holding more than 15% of shares, and that ministers can block a sale of the nuclear business. Indeed, with the order book standing at \$105.3bn, the idea of nationalisation is as “ridiculous” as it is “unnecessary”, commented the independent defence analyst Howard Wheeldon. Even suggesting it, he said, was “irresponsible in the extreme”.

ISIL: Past its high noon?

Editorial

The Economist

When ISIL burst out of Syria in June 2014, seizing Mosul, Iraq's second city, and nearly reaching Baghdad, "it became the richest terror organisation in history". It plundered the banks in Mosul, including the Central Bank, whose vaults contained an estimated \$425m. It pilfered heavily into a pipeline network filled with 3m barrels of oil. Its self-declared caliphate included some of the best agricultural land in the Fertile Crescent, and the heavy industry that Saddam Hussein had concentrated in loyal Sunni Arab areas. A report compiled for Reuters in October 2014 lists 13 Iraqi oilfields, three refineries, five cement plants, some big wheat silos and a salt mine. Now for the good news: while earlier this year, monitors estimated the caliphate's GDP at \$6 billion, a huge sum for a terrorist group, it is "peanuts for a state of 7m at war". ISIL's army consumes over 70% of revenues, according to the report. Foreign fighters are particularly costly, with foreign Arabs being paid at least twice as much as locals and European fighters getting over three times as much.

The risky outlook for 2016

Rebecca Smith

Management Today

Bad news if you were hoping that 2016 would be an improvement on this year, says Rebecca Smith. According to the annual "global risk map" devised by consultancy firm Control Risks, companies now face the "highest level of risk in a decade". Indeed, CEO Richard Fenning notes that the worldwide risk outlook now stands at "eight out of ten". The biggest threats – including the strengthening of ISIL and uncertainty over China's ability to adapt to slower growth – come as no surprise. Nor does "the back and forth over Britain's membership of the EU". Cyber-attacks, meanwhile, are likely to remain a major concern for companies: incidents have doubled over the past 12 months. But "hey, things could be worse". According to Fenner, businesses today face lower risks than at the start of the risk map some 40 years ago, when they had to contend with an oil crisis, heightened tensions in the Middle East and the Cold War. "Compared to then, we are in much better shape," he says. "We are healthier, we're wealthier and most of us are safer." Happy Christmas.

Yahoo is dying of boredom

Farhad Manjoo

The New York Times

Nobody thought it would be easy for Marissa Mayer to save Yahoo, said Farhad Manjoo. But "what is genuinely surprising is how boring Mayer's tenure has been". When Yahoo's CEO took the reins three years ago, the company desperately needed "a new identity", and Mayer, a respected former Google executive, seemed like just the person to try something dramatic. Today, however, the once-mighty internet giant remains more or less the same hodgepodge of ad-supported news and entertainment destinations that Mayer inherited, with no breakthrough products. Yahoo's competitors, meanwhile, have embarked on ambitious and forward-thinking initiatives: Facebook has added new messaging apps, and Apple and Google have launched voice-based searching. Yahoo, by contrast, has been a dabbler, "rarely committing to anything early enough to make a difference". Mayer could have made plenty of transformative moves. In 2012, "a visionary might have guessed that cable bundles would soon be on the wane" and tried to buy a then-struggling Netflix. Instead, Mayer spent lavishly on a host of other properties that haven't paid off.

Workers who raise the alarm

The Economist

Companies have a bad habit of trying to silence and punish whistleblowers – even though doing so is rarely in their long-term interest, said The Economist. "Bad news tends to come out eventually, and looks worse if it appears that bosses tried to suppress it." Takata, the Japanese auto parts manufacturer currently mired in scandal over lethally defective air bags, "might have avoided the worst of its problems if it had paid more attention to American employees who rang alarm bells a decade ago". Volkswagen has belatedly promised not to fire employees who come forward with incriminating information about its emissions-cheating scandal. More often than not, encouraging whistleblowers makes sense. Studies consistently show they are driven not by greed or revenge, as many executives suspect, but by a desire to do the right thing. That's why 90% of them choose to report internally first, rather than running to the authorities or the press. "Given the choice, they would rather warn than accuse."

City profiles

Craig Wright

It's said one should never meet one's heroes, said Thomas Fox-Brewster in Forbes. Many bitcoin fans would probably agree. What a letdown to discover that the cryptocurrency's fabled inventor – who went by the *nom de guerre* Satoshi Nakamoto – is a "garrulous" Australian cybersecurity expert named Craig Steven Wright. Far from being the enigmatic anarchist of repute, reporters from tech magazines Wired and Gizmodo have unmasked a Sydney suburbanite, with a penchant for business clichés, who seems to enjoy working as a government contractor. Of course, it could turn out to be an elaborate hoax. But if Nakamoto truly is Wright, "the myth of a reclusive and eloquent bitcoin god" has been "well and truly busted". Past failures to identify Nakamoto have made



bitcoin watchers "sceptical", said Maria Bustillos in The New Yorker. And all the evidence produced so far is "convoluted" and "circumstantial". Two things would verify the the creator's identity beyond doubt: the digitally-encrypted signature he used when making the first bitcoin transactions in 2009; and knowledge of "private conversations" with other key developers. Neither magazine has come up with the goods. Since being "outed", Wright – who possesses a fortune in bitcoin – has disappeared, and wiped his internet history; while the websites of two IT companies in which he held substantial stakes, DeMorgan and Cloudcroft, have vanished. "Likely in connection with these developments", police raided Wright's house on "tax matters" last week. According to neighbours, he is heading for London.

SOURCE: SOLDIERX.COM

Who's tipping what

The week's best buys

888 Holdings*The Times*

Online operator 888 is the "class act in a consolidating sector", holding out against mergers. Thanks to its proprietary technology, earnings should be at the top end of forecasts, boosted by casino and sport. Buy. 179p.

CareTech*Investors Chronicle*

The care home and services provider has signed new loan facilities which, together with £10m free cash flow, should allow it to continue with acquisitions and to reconfigure existing business. Yields a decent 3.6%. Buy. 234p.

Centrica*The Times*

The British Gas owner has been hit by the drop in the wholesale gas price and a threatened regulatory crack-down. But capital spending and costs are down, the CEO "inspires confidence" and it yields 5.7%. Buy. 211.5p.

Clinigen*Shares*

This speciality pharma giant supplies drugs for clinical trials, "ethical" unlicensed medicines and an MRSA treatment. It's expanding, with a buy and build strategy. Profits look set to grow as acquisitions reach the bottom line. Buy. 680.2p.

Dixons Carphone*The Mail on Sunday*

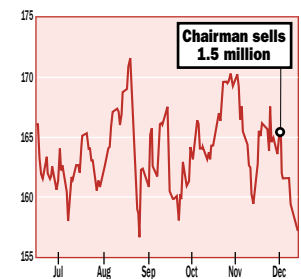
The electrical retail group continues to deliver since last year's merger. Online trading is boosted by high street recognition, and the group is expanding into the US. Citigroup expects profits to rise by a fifth, and names a 535p target. Buy. 470.5p.

UBM*Investors Chronicle*

The events titan is staging a comeback, focusing on larger trade shows and emerging markets. The acquisition of US peer Advanstar should boost growth too. Shares are cheap and yield 4.3%. Buy. 502.5p.

Directors' dealings

LondonMetric Property



Changing consumer habits have led to a surge in demand for out-of-town distribution as "clicks replace bricks". Retail property specialist LMP is in a strong position to exploit the changes. Chairman Patrick Vaughan, an industry veteran, sold shares worth £2.46m, but still holds nearly 14 million.

SOURCE: FINANCIAL TIMES

...and some to sell

Associated British Foods*Investors Chronicle*

ABF's Primark budget clothing chain is growing sales through expansion, but margins could suffer and success is far from guaranteed in the US. The group's non-Primark divisions don't justify the sky-high valuation either. Sell. £35.78.

Carpentryright*The Sunday Times*

The flooring specialist is closing stores to slash its rent bill and has invested in its website and marketing. But it will take years to see decent profit improvements, and Carpentryright may be hit hard if interest rates rise. Sell. 480.5p.

Cobham*Sharecast*

Berenberg has downgraded the aerospace and defence group, citing persistent headwinds in its marine, satellite comms, and oil and gas end-markets. The balance sheet is stretched and working capital improvement is slow. Sell. 288.6p.

Ocado*The Daily Telegraph*

The online grocer has reported another year of rapid sales growth, but it has struggled to establish the dominant supermarket delivery presence it set out to achieve, and margins remain wafer thin. Sell. 335.8p.

Sports Direct International*The Times*

The sportswear retailer is seeing flat sales, slowing profit growth and mixed results from expanding into Europe. There are also "too many red rags" about governance and behaviour. Shares are too pricey. Sell. 592.5p.

Stagecoach*Investors Chronicle*

Stagecoach's rail operations are performing well for now, but the TransPennine franchise bid failed and margins have fallen in the group's bus divisions, which cover North America, London and the UK. Sell. 307p.

Form guide

Shares tipped 12 weeks ago

Best tip**Breedon Aggregates***Investors Chronicle*
up 21.64% to 62.95p**Worst tip****InterQuest Group***The Mail on Sunday*
down 12.46% to 80.1p

Market view

"Once again China concerns have spiked just as a Fed rate decision looms."

Chris Beauchamp of IG.
Quoted in The Times

Market summary

Key numbers for investors

	15 Dec 2015	Week before	Change (%)
FTSE 100	6017.79	6135.22	-1.91%
FTSE All-share UK	3327.71	3386.98	-1.75%
Dow Jones	17542.04	17596.96	-0.31%
NASDAQ	4995.42	5096.22	-1.98%
Nikkei 225	18565.90	19492.60	-4.75%
Hang Seng	21274.37	21905.13	-2.88%
Gold	1061.50	1072.10	-0.99%
Brent Crude Oil	39.25	40.48	-3.04%
DIVIDEND YIELD (FTSE 100)	4.15%	4.07%	
UK 10-year gilts yield	1.90	1.82	
US 10-year Treasuries	2.23	2.22	
UK ECONOMIC DATA			
Latest CPI (yoy)	0.10% (Nov)	-0.1% (Oct)	
Latest RPI (yoy)	1.10% (Nov)	0.7% (Oct)	
Halifax house price (yoy)	+9.0% (Nov)	+9.7% (Oct)	
£1 STERLING	\$1.501 €1.373 ¥183.169		

Best and worst performing shares

WEEK'S CHANGE, FTSE 100 STOCKS

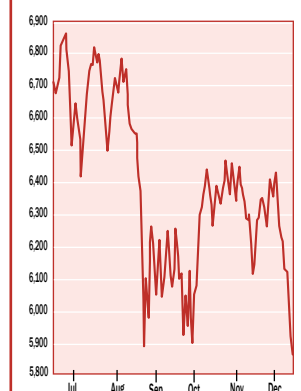
RISES	Price	% change
Ashtead Group	1100.00	+6.69
Tui (Lon)	1189.00	+5.31
Glencore	82.37	+3.68
Centrica	209.30	+3.67
Berkeley Group Hdg.	3725.00	+3.47
FALLS		
Anglo American	271.10	-16.24
Old Mutual	166.20	-14.68
Sports Direct Intl.	579.50	-14.15
Rolls-Royce Holdings	540.00	-8.47
Pearson	707.00	-7.46

BEST AND WORST UK STOCKS OVERALL

Forte Energy	0.01	+127.20
Arian Silver	1.62	-85.23

Source: Datastream (not adjusted for dividends). Prices on 15 Dec (pm)

Following the Footsie



6-month movement in the FTSE 100 index

WITH GREAT POWER COMES THIS CAR

DODGE CHARGER



The Dodge Charger is fitted with a 370 BHP HEMI® V8 engine. Add to it its world-class safety features and you've got a perfect combination of power and responsibility.

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DODGE 

“Spend more time in graveyards”

The names of certain philosophers, artists and weighty thinkers tend to crop up in conversation, but all too often we haven't a clue what they actually thought and said. A new bluffer's guide presents their views in a nutshell – here are six of them

Michel de Montaigne (1533-92)

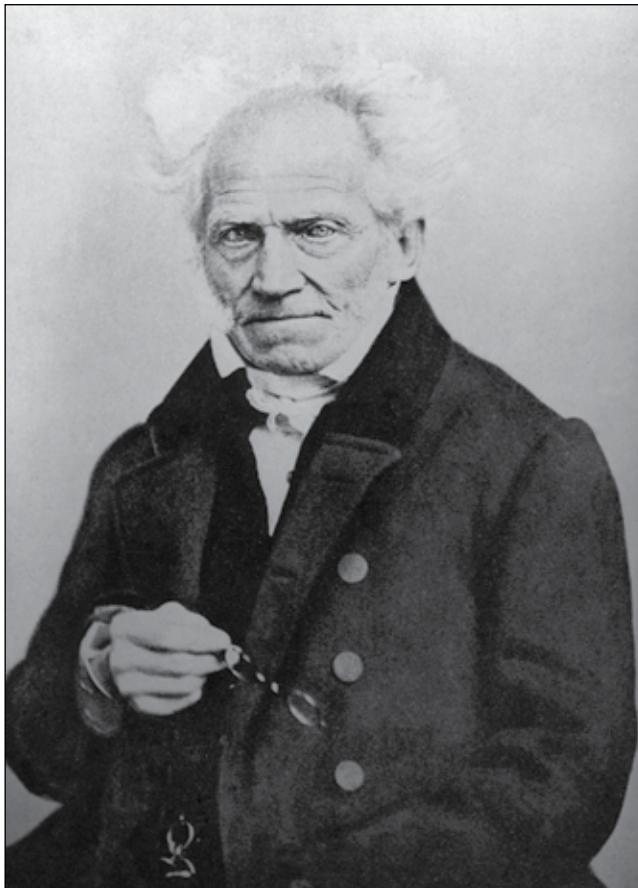
When Michel de Montaigne was 38, his best friend Étienne died, and wracked by grief, he shut himself away in a tower on the family estate, surrounded by books. He stayed there for a decade, seeing no one and devoting himself to writing a huge volume of essays. These were remarkably ahead of their time. No one had thought of combining intellectual arguments with personal anecdotes in the way Montaigne did, though the style is now copied by countless journalists the world over. Not that, on the whole, they manage it with quite the eloquence and wisdom of Montaigne.

One who came close was the English journalist William Hazlitt, who summed up the admiration in which the French author is universally held by describing him as “the first who had the courage to say as an author what he felt as a man”. For Montaigne didn't kowtow to the conventional views of his day. He wrote, simply and succinctly, what he personally felt on an amazing range of topics – and wrote so well that he's extremely readable even five centuries on, whether he's musing about war or expounding his theories of education. The best method for teaching children, he argued, was to give them the space to teach themselves. That's the only way anyone ever really remembers anything.

He'd had a pretty strange education himself. His father had insisted that he [the young Michel] should be spoken to only in Latin, so that Latin would be his first language. Then he was assigned a German tutor who couldn't even speak French. In the event, it all seemed to work, for the eccentric upbringing produced one of the most enlightened and delightful writers of all time. But don't take our word for it. According to Friedrich Nietzsche, Montaigne “truly augmented the joy of living on this Earth”, while French literary critic Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve recommended reading at least a page of his writing every evening.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

One difficulty with understanding philosophers is that they're nearly always responding to other philosophers. To understand philosopher A, you need to know something about philosopher B. So it was with Arthur Schopenhauer, whose masterwork *The World As Will And Representation* commented on the theories of his fellow German Immanuel Kant. Kant had claimed it was impossible to penetrate our veil of perception and grasp anything about the real, or “noumenal”, world. Not so, Schopenhauer



Schopenhauer: Loved his pet poodles

retorted. We can sense within our every mental action the workings of our will, which he termed “the will to live”, and conceived as a constant struggle to survive and reproduce. The original bleak existential philosopher, he was extraordinarily (one might say wilfully) pessimistic. For Schopenhauer, life was “a constantly prevented dying”, just as walking is “a constantly prevented falling”.

The will that drives us makes us unhappy. The good news is we can escape. A respite is possible in aesthetic contemplation: as we gaze at a painting, we forget ourselves and are briefly happy (or at least not unhappy). A more permanent solution is a quasi-Buddhist withdrawal from the daily struggle, living like a hermit. Schopenhauer was one of the first Western philosophers to pay attention to Eastern traditions. Bizarre-looking, with a huge domed forehead and crazy clown hair, he was objectionable in person, despising women and Jews. In later life, he increasingly practised what he preached and kept himself to himself, rarely

venturing out of doors and devoting himself to his studies. Almost the only company he could tolerate was that of his beloved pet poodles, to each of whom he gave the same name, Atma – the Hindu word for the universal soul.

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)

The German philosopher Martin Heidegger was once asked what people might do to lead better lives. He replied that we should all “spend more time in graveyards”. As advice goes, this may sound a little morbid, but Heidegger's overarching philosophy, of which the acceptance of our mortality is an integral part, is surprisingly practical and positive.

In his work *Being and Time* (1927), Heidegger argued that it is only by confronting the fact we are going to die that we can

start to live. Or to use his terminology, it is only by embracing *das nichts* (non-existence) that we can get to grips with *das sein* (existence). Most of us spend most of our time living “inauthentic” lives: worried about the opinions of people who don't really care for us, and who in any case cannot save us from death – so why are we striving to impress them? Secondly, he wrote that we are all “thrown” into this world. By this he meant that we don't choose to be born, or where we are born, or who our parents are, or what our education should be. As a result, our early experiences and beliefs are “thrown” upon us. This “thrown-ness”

“Bizarre-looking, with a huge domed forehead and crazy clown hair, he was objectionable in person, despising women and Jews”

(*geworfenheit*), like our inauthenticity, is something we must transcend. How? Heidegger recommended long walks in the countryside, pondering the miracle of existence.

If this all makes Heidegger sound relatively easy to understand, don't be misled. One of the most important, and complicated, philosophers of the 20th century, he took his place in a tradition of German philosophical incomprehensibility, along with the likes of Kant. (This, of course, makes him a particularly impressive name to drop into conversation.) Which means that one can't say with total certainty what he believed about anything.

Ayn Rand (1905-82)

In the TV series *Mad Men*, set in the world of strong-jawed, high-flying ad executives in 1960s New York, the hero Don Draper is advised by his boss to read a novel called *Atlas Shrugged*. It's a popular book with capitalists. Why? Because its underlying philosophy is that the most important person in your life is you, and if anyone tells you different, they're talking hogwash. No matter that it's very long and appallingly written (the attractive capitalists have such hefty jaws, it's a miracle they don't topple over). Since it appeared in the 1950s, the book has sold millions of copies.

Its author, Ayn Rand, literally turned selfishness into a philosophy. She called it "objectivism" and she seemed pretty smug about it. She once declared herself "the most creative thinker alive". On another occasion, she declared that the only philosophers worth reading were "the three As": Aristotle, Aquinas and Ayn Rand. Her reason for including the first two (sometimes she left out Aquinas) was that they emphasised the importance of reason. Reason was her guiding light, for she argued that it led the unbiased thinker to embrace a total, lifelong egotism.

Although some find her message invigorating, to others it's hard to stomach. To put it in context, it was the philosophy of a

woman who, born in Russia, had witnessed the excesses of the revolution. Escaping to New York, she went the other way, embracing a right-wing individualism. Her two most important novels were *The Fountainhead* (1943), the tale of an objectivist architect, and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), the tale of an objectivist businessman. The latter concludes with a 60-page speech in which the hero, John Galt, sings the praises of selfishness. Although Rand is derided by most literary critics, she has become a kind of patron saint of unabashed capitalism. Her funeral included a six-foot floral arrangement in the shape of a dollar sign.

Michel Foucault (1926-84)

Michel Foucault (pronounced: foo-COE) was an extremely weird Frenchman who argued that there was no such thing as normal. It wasn't just his shaven head and penchant for wearing turtleneck sweaters, though these were striking enough. Foucault was also prone to violence when young. He self-harmed, and at university chased one of his fellow students, brandishing a knife. In later life, he was highly promiscuous and enjoyed hanging out in bars and engaging in sado-masochistic activities with strangers. Yet he himself would have argued – indeed, this was the central argument of his life's work – that there was nothing especially



Rand: "The most creative thinker alive"

unusual about all this. For the very ideas of usual and unusual were (and had always been) artificial constructs invented by the few who had power to control the many who had none.

He backed up his theories in tomes such as *Madness and Civilisation* (1961), *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and his unfinished *The History of Sexuality*, in which he highlighted fascinating examples that supported his cultural relativism; instances where the pronouncements of science or medicine were designed to oppress a particular class of people. Anti-authoritarian Foucauldianism was trendy in the 1960s and still appeals to many who feel excluded or pigeonholed. Clearly, he had a point, but there were limits. It's hard, for example, to make the case that the concept of mental illness is entirely a social construct designed to oppress certain social groups, as some have done, quoting Foucault. Sometimes these attractive near-conspiracy theories came up hard against the brick wall of reality. For

instance, when Foucault first heard about AIDS, he declared it to be a lie devised by the government in order to persecute certain men. In due course, however, he contracted the disease, which ultimately killed him.

Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007)

In the sci-fi thriller *The Matrix*, a character is seen reading a copy of *Simulacra and Simulation* by the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard (pronounced: BOE-dree-ar). Fittingly so. For the film questions the nature of reality, and Baudrillard's big idea was that images of reality have become more "real" than reality. For instance, when we think of love, we don't think of love as it is, but as we have seen it portrayed in movies such as *Titanic* or *Brief Encounter*, or in advertisements for aftershave or washing powder. Ditto cars, dogs, packets of biscuits – pretty much everything, in fact. To make his theory sound more impressive, the author referred to each of these received and influential images as a "simulacrum" (plural: simulacra).

Taking the argument further, he pointed out that an object was never merely an object, but always came with certain ideas

and values attached. For example, a BMW is not only a car but also a proof that you are well off. He got into trouble when he claimed that the Gulf war didn't exist; it was just TV images of it that existed. Not a very tactful observation. His critics say that when you decode Baudrillard's theories, it turns out he's just stating the obvious. More than that, he's overstating it. For while it might be true that we now send more emails than we have conversations over the course of an average day, that doesn't mean the internet is more real for us than the real world. It merely means we're making use of technology.

Some have also suggested that Baudrillard may have taken himself too seriously. He was never entirely comfortable with the idea of being associated with *The Matrix* and tried to distance himself from the movie, claiming that the brothers who had directed it had misunderstood his oeuvre.

Taken from How to Sound Cultured by Thomas W. Hodgkinson and Hubert van den Bergh, published by Icon.

"Baudrillard's big idea was that images of reality have become more 'real' than reality"

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THE WEEK CROSSWORD 087

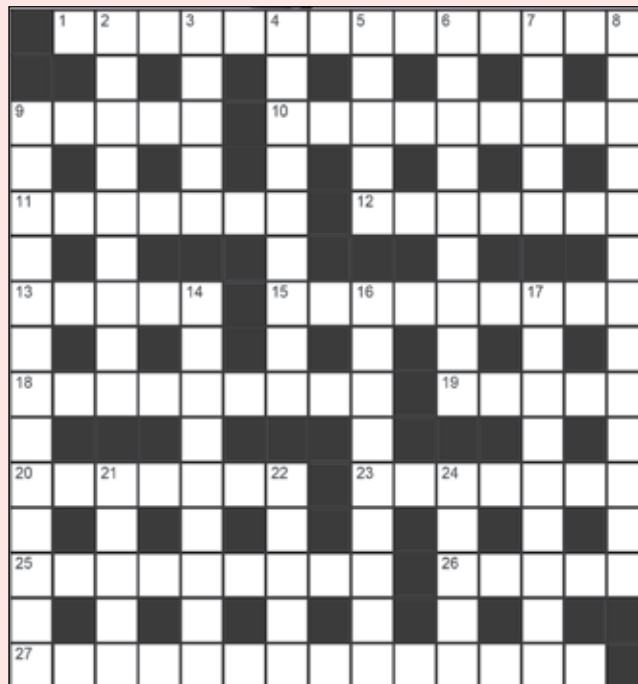
ACROSS

- 1 Previously spoken of bosses in on a diet that's working (14)
- 9 Stands for vehicle (5)
- 10 More than one pound of sultanias in Turkey? (9)
- 11 Sitting around Land's End gets you relaxed (7)
- 12 Wardrobe items obtained from hot French town (7)
- 13 Recorded position after one of the Kennedys disappeared (5)
- 15 Nice organ playing? Bliss perhaps (9)
- 18 Being ahead, silly arses restricting route (9)
- 19 Tuscan city with attractive person spoken of in Lancashire? (5)
- 20 Ways to indicate distance in front (7)
- 23 Rent again free (7)
- 25 Your setter's in a country showing spirit (9)
- 26 Exposes trouble dividing two Poles (5)
- 27 Scandi father with son tests cakes (6,8)

DOWN

- 2 He'll take you for a ride in fast Rolls Royce due to be repaired (9)
- 3 One brought in support to have another go (5)
- 4 Counsel wrongly treated in case of aborted missive (9)
- 5 Surprising direction shown by Eastern Orthodox (5)
- 6 Popular senior officer for the most part (2,7)
- 7 Sound advice finally is on dancing (5)
- 8 Diana's flower borders may be where things have gone blooming wrong! (8,5)
- 9 Don't get redundant miss in trouble (13)
- 14 Delivery carts restricting view badly in entrances (9)
- 16 Unrestricted number on street rounds (2,7)
- 17 Fruit in centre ordered around one (9)
- 21 Head of government in check – that's the rule (5)
- 22 Stint in Gdansk impossible (5)
- 24 Cosmetic used on ship (5)

Clue of the week: Interjection to make ruefully? Quite the reverse! (6, first letter E) *Luciano Ward, winner of S Times Contest*



Solution to Crossword 085

ACROSS: 1 Battersea 6 Dope 9 Go ashore 10 Prefab 11 Takes apart 13 Skew 14 Fils 15 Great deal 18 Number two 20 Body 21 Caps 23 Tutoresses 25 Boxers 26 Machismo 28 Earl 29 Sole agent

DOWN: 2 Adoration 3 Tasters 4 Roo 5 Enema 7 Oversee 8 Erase 10 Petit four 12 Aigrettes 16 Eat 17 Ladies' man 19 Masseur 20 Busking 22 Alone 24 Tempo 27 Coe

Clue of the week: Oceanic winds blow across the Atlantic (7, first letter C)

Solution: COCAINE (oceanic anagram indicated by "winds")

Sudoku 087 (very difficult)

	8		9	4		1	7
2	4	7	8				5
	9	1					
1	5			9		6	3
			6			4	
4							
9	7					5	4
6			5	1		8	3
			7			9	2

Fill in all the squares so that each row, column and each of the 3x3 squares contains all the digits from 1 to 9

Solution to Sudoku 086

8	6	7	4	2	5	1	3	9
4	1	9	8	3	6	2	5	7
3	5	2	1	9	7	8	4	6
6	8	1	7	4	3	9	2	5
9	4	5	2	1	8	6	7	3
7	2	3	6	5	9	4	8	1
5	3	4	9	6	2	7	1	8
2	9	8	3	7	1	5	6	4
1	7	6	5	8	4	3	9	2

Charity of the week



UAE Dolphin Project

The UAE Dolphin Project is a non-profit initiative dedicated to investigating the dolphin population along the UAE coastline to provide scientific information and to support the conservation of these local marine species. This is done through the implementation of a research programme, as well as running a media campaign and educational programmes involving the public and private organisations. The ultimate goal is to promote the conservation of dolphin species and the local marine environment.

To find out more visit wp.uaedolphinproject.org

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